

U.S. says conflict not imminent

NICOSIA (R) — The United States said Tuesday Iraq had stepped up military activity on its borders with Syria and Turkey but there was no sign of conflict. The U.S. Defence Department said armed conflict was not imminent. "We are aware of some increase in Iraqi military activity near the Syrian and Turkish borders, but there is nothing to indicate imminent hostilities," a Pentagon spokesman said. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said the Gulf crisis had sparked threats against the United States and called for worldwide precautions. "During this period of heightened tension, the terrorist threat to our forces in Saudi Arabia and to U.S. personnel and interests worldwide is, and will, remain high," Cheney told the Senate Armed Services Committee. He said pro-Iraqi demonstrations in major Middle East cities continued to fuel anti-American sentiment.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية «الراي»

360,000 wait to enter Jordan

AMMAN (R) — About 300,000 Egyptians and at least 65,000 Asians are waiting to cross into Jordan from Iraq, the head of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society said Tuesday. Ibrahim Ahmad Al Nouri, on a visit to Amman, told Reuters his organisation had set up a large transit camp in Baghdad which was now holding about 3,000 Sri Lankans and Indians. Nouri said there were about 300,000 Egyptians in Iraq trying to leave for Jordan. There were 60,000 more people — Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, Indians, and Egyptians — in three camps run by the Iraqi health ministry on the Iraqi side of the border, he added. Nouri's estimates were the first information Baghdad has released on the numbers of refugees fleeing to Jordan, which has already received at least 420,000. Nouri said he planned to discuss with Jordan's Red Crescent Society how to arrange a two-month supply of food and medicine for refugees flooding out of Kuwait into Iraq.

Bush said to drop opposition to Soviet role in Mideast

NEW YORK (Agencies) — U.S. President George Bush, reversing a decade of opposition to Soviet involvement in Middle East peace efforts, used the Helsinki summit to invite Moscow to play a greater diplomatic role in the region, the New York Times reported Tuesday.

Citing unnamed Bush administration officials, the Times said Bush at his summit with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, agreed to consider working with Moscow on problems such as the Arab-Israeli conflict. White House officials were unavailable for comment on the report.

Administration officials told the newspaper that Bush was open to a Middle East peace conference long-favoured by Moscow, as long as the Iraqi takeover of Kuwait was not on the agenda.

But superpower cooperation in the Middle East is dependent on the outcome of the Gulf crisis and whether the Soviet Union continues to pursue a policy U.S. officials believe is helpful in solving regional conflicts, the Times said.

"There is no blueprint here," an administration official in Washington told the newspaper, "but there is a recognition that Soviet foreign policy towards regional disputes is changing and that their new thinking deserves to be matched by new thinking here."

The Times said it was unclear whether Washington had discussed with Israel its invitation to Moscow to play a greater diplomatic role in the region. Israel has long opposed such a role for the Soviet Union.

Washington has opposed Soviet diplomatic involvement in the region because of Moscow's refusal to restore diplomatic ties with Israel, severed in 1967.

U.S. officials say they fear Moscow would be biased against Israel because of its close links to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Baker in Moscow

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze met Tuesday to tackle the few remaining disputed issues in a final document on German unification.

They were also expected to discuss the Gulf crisis and arms control. But Shevardnadze said the focus would be Germany.

"The main task as I see it is to prepare for the meeting tomorrow," he told reporters. "There are certain questions remaining that require the ministers' attention."

On Wednesday, the four World War II allies — the Soviet Union, United States, Britain and France — are to initial an agreement setting conditions for ending their rights and responsibilities under the two Germanys unite Oct. 3.

Despite the residual problems to be worked out, officials seemed confident that the signing would go forward.

Baker arrived in Moscow from Brussels Monday night after briefing NATO allies Sunday's superpower summit, which the Communist party newspaper Pravda said reached a new and beneficial stage in U.S.-Soviet relations.

He remains in the Soviet Union until Thursday, when he flies to Damascus for talks with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad (see page 2).

At their summit, Bush and Gorbachev reaffirmed their opposition to Iraqi aggression and support for a U.N. embargo against Baghdad, but agreed that the crisis should be resolved peacefully.

Differences surfaced over the possible use of military force to eject Iraq from Kuwait if the sanctions fail.

U.S. and Soviet officials have discussed the possibility of using a huge Soviet cargo ship to transport American tanks to the Gulf.

Jordan hails Iraqi offer of free oil

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Mudar Badran has described Iraq's offer of free oil to Third World countries as a "very bold and pioneering step in the right direction."

In a statement to the Iraqi News Agency, Badran expressed his appreciation of Iraq for the initiative, which, he said, "reflects the Iraqi leadership's foresightedness and its realisation of the need to alleviate the sufferings of people in the Third World Nations."

"This move has a deep and great dimension, coming under the present circumstances when the world is witnessing a soaring rise in the price of oil which is bound to increase the financial burdens on the poorer nations," Badran said.

As a result of the higher oil prices poor states will also have to face the dilemma of purchasing commodities at increased prices from the industrialised nations, the prime minister said.

Badran expressed the view that the Iraqi decision would abort moves by world oil companies and certain oil-producing nations to exploit other countries, particularly the poor countries of the world, which unlike the industrialised nations cannot survive under these conditions.

"The Iraqi move reflects true solidarity and sympathy with the other countries of the Third World," the prime minister said.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Thabet Al Taber said in a statement to the Iraqi News Agency that President Saddam Hussein's move "reflects the Iraqi leadership's realisation of the severe difficulties facing the poor nations of the world as a result of the sudden and sharp rise in the price of oil. The rise in oil prices, he said, could stem socio-economic development in many of the Third World countries."

The Iraqi president's move will have beneficial and positive results, especially among Third World countries which are in dire need of assistance, Taber added.

Referring to Jordan's oil requirements, Taber said that oil supplies to the Kingdom from Iraq had always been secured under special arrangements. He did not give details.

However, in a statement to Al Dustour daily, the minister said that Jordan welcomes the Iraqi offer, especially as free oil supplies will help the Kingdom pursue the implementation of socio-economic projects.

The minister promised to disclose soon to the public in detail the beneficial effects which Jordan would get as a result of the latest Iraqi decision.

Saddam, in a televised statement Monday, offered to give Third World countries oil free of charge if they applied to Baghdad and made their own shipping arrangements.

Iraq currently faces a crippling trade embargo led by the United Nations in protest against the country's Aug. 2 takeover of Kuwait.

New York spot crude futures soared late in the day to \$31.60 on nervous short covering and rumours of increased tension in the Gulf.

Saddam said the free oil would not break the United Nations embargo because no money would change hands, a supposition denied by White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

"The (U.N.) sanctions relate to all commodities. Cost is not a factor," said Fitzwater.

U.S. analysts said the move might push Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing countries to match Saddam's offer to maintain support for the embargo.

"The offer of free oil puts the onus of providing oil to the Third World on the West and its supporters," said G. Henry Schuler of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

Many poor countries have been hit hard by the embargo against trade with Iraq and Kuwait.

The embargo has removed about four million barrels of crude oil a day off world market and unleashed a 40 per cent price rise since early August.

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Asians' evacuation improved

AMMAN (Agencies) — Thousands of Asians flew home Tuesday aboard airlift flights from Jordan, now better prepared for new fugitives from Kuwait after grappling with a massive exodus for weeks.

As the flights continued, hundreds of others surged towards buses in Amman, anxious to start their journey home after weeks of waiting, sandstorms and hunger in the desert.

In Geneva, U.N. officials praised the "swift and generous response" from the world community to the refugee crisis and said the United Nations could now cope with a fresh flood of people.

Coordinated international efforts to help Jordan deal with the massive flow of refugees was beginning to pay dividends, U.N. officials said.

The United Nations complained last week of a poor international response to its Jordan emergency relief effort, the largest since the Ethiopian famine six years ago killed at least one million people.

A spokesman for the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation (UNDRRO) said that for the first time since the Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces, the number of refugees repatriated outnumbered new arrivals.

On Monday, 3,078 crossed into Jordan while 7,160 were flown out. He gave a figure of 74,790 refugees in Jordanian camps Monday, compared to 77,030 the previous day.

"It shows that the U.N. system is capable of meeting the challenge and that we could deal with a fresh flow in the future," the spokesman, Mohammad Khairi, said.

Rolf Jenny, head of transport at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), said the airlift it was supervising was going well.

Jenny said it would involve 110 flights over three weeks to repatriate some 42,000 Asians, mostly to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

Jenny, a Swiss national, said the situation remained precarious in refugee sites he had visited.

"But food, shelter and medicine assistance is better organised, thanks to good coordination between U.N. agencies and non-governmental bodies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and Medecins sans Frontieres," he said.

Jordan praised

Jenny praised the Jordanian government's attitude towards the refugee emergency. "Jordan has lived up to its tradition of hospitality," he said.

But the future is still uncertain for about two million Asians trapped in Iraq and Kuwait and no-one knows when or how they will attempt to leave. Jenny said they included some 80,000 female house servants from Sri Lanka working in Kuwait, who probably became jobless and penniless overnight.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), which is also involved in the Jordan relief effort, estimates some \$2.4 million was needed to meet the country's health needs.

In the past few days thousands of Asians have been moved from desert camps, especially the Shaalan 1 site in the 60-man's land between Iraq and the Ruweisat border post.

Selamneh Hammed, head of the government task force, said only 11,000 people were left at Shaalan 1 on Monday night. At least 43,000 were previously crammed into the camp.

A doctor at Shaalan 1, run by the Peace-based Medicine and Frontiers relief agency, said 6,000 Asians remained there Tuesday, sharply down on 15,000 three days earlier.

Indian embassy official Arun Goyal said 10,000 Indians were still in the border region and 6,000 in Amman, half of whom were to fly home Tuesday. "Until now 29,136 Indians have left Jordan on 104 flights," he said.

Goyal said he had no information that Indians were piling up on the Iraqi side of the border. But 2,000

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King regrets Klibi's resignation, pays tribute to his efforts

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein said Tuesday he deeply regretted the resignation of Arah League Secretary-General Chadi Klibi.

"I received the decision of your resignation from your post with deep regret... throughout the years you were up to the duties and responsibilities entrusted to you," he said in a telegram to Klibi carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Klibi, a Tunisian, served as secretary-general of the Arah League for 11 years before resigning last week.

Arab diplomats said he quit because Syria and Saudi Arabia faulted his handling of the Gulf crisis at a foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo last

month.

They were said to have been upset at his failure to rouse more Arab countries to send troops to Saudi Arabia alongside U.S.-led forces to counter Iraq's takeover of Kuwait.

Klibi has not disclosed his reasons for leaving.

In his cable, the King said Jordan would always remember Klibi's "role and his efforts to shoulder his duties and responsibilities in the best possible manner."

"Your dedication and sincere efforts reflected your true national belonging and your keenness to safeguard the Arah League and promote to the success of its various organisations," the cable said.

Though Klibi has refused to reveal the reasons for his resignation, Arah diplomatic sources said the Syrian and Saudi foreign ministers had accused Klibi in Cairo last month of not doing enough to get more Arab states to send troops to Saudi Arabia.

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'Maksoud resigns'

The Arab League's ambassador in Washington and at the United Nations, Clovis Maksoud, has resigned his post but the Arab League has refused to accept the resignation, according to Agence France Presse (AFP).

AFP said Maksoud had submitted his resignation July 1.

Maksoud refused to give any reasons for his resignation which was submitted before the outbreak of the Gulf crisis, the report added.

Tunis rejects league transfer to Cairo

TUNIS (Agencies) — Tunisia Tuesday rejected a decision by 12 Arab states to move league headquarters from Tunis to Cairo, confirming a deep rift in the pan-Arab grouping.

Foreign Minister Habib Boulares said the government objected to the decision by foreign ministers of 12 of the 21 members in the Egyptian capital Monday night.

The government, he told parliament, "rejects what has been done and reserves the right to save this Arab institution from destruction."

In Cairo, resistance by Tunisia and Morocco forced Arab states commissioned to implement the move to call off their first meeting, diplomats said.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Rabat Tuesday from Tunis launching an apparent drive to reverse Monday's decision.

Arafat, accompanied by his political adviser Bassam Abu

Sharif and Palestine Central Committee member Mahmoud Abbas, made no statement on his arrival but Arab diplomats said he was likely to ask Morocco to reverse its stance on the issue.

Jordan, Iraq, the PLO, Tunisia and five other members did not attend Monday's meeting but Morocco voted in favour of the move.

The Cairo meeting deepened a rift in the Arab World over Iraq's Aug. 2 takeover of Kuwait. Arafat has condemned the invasion but is widely seen as sympathetic to Baghdad.

Iraq originally spearheaded a campaign to move the league headquarters back to Cairo but reversed its stance in response to Egypt's implacable opposition to its annexation of Kuwait.

In a statement in Tunis, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) said the issue should be re-examined at a regular league meeting scheduled for Tunis Sept. 17.

"As current chairman of the Arab states council, Palestine believes it is necessary for this question to be discussed during the next ordinary meeting," Farouk Qaddoumi, the PLO's foreign affairs chief, said.

"The Arab Nation is going through a difficult period at present and we call on all to show patience and thoughtfulness when examining the question of the league's transfer," he added.

The Cairo meeting voted to delay the Tunis session until Sept. 27 because of the rift and it was not immediately clear when it would convene.

The states which approved the transfer Monday formed a five-member committee, replacing the one headed by Iraq, to implement the move by Oct. 31.

The committee — Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria and the United Arab Emirates — was due to meet Tuesday but an Egyptian

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Tunisia says food not included in sanctions, unveils peace plan

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia Tuesday said it backed U.N. Security Council resolutions on the Gulf crisis but trade sanctions against Iraq did not include food and medicine.

Tunisia, which opposes the deployment of foreign forces in the Gulf, also announced a plan of its own to defuse the Gulf crisis.

"Tunisia considers itself bound by Security Council resolutions on the Gulf crisis," Prime Minister Hamad Karoui said in a speech to parliament given on behalf of President Zine Abidine Ben Ali.

"It rejects (Iraq's) detention of civilians..." (but) the embargo does not include food and medicine," he said.

An Aug. 6 Security Council resolution bans almost all trade with Iraq and Washington has interpreted it to include food.

A diplomatic source in Algiers said Monday all five members of the Arab Maghreb Union — Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania and Morocco — rejected this reading.

Foreign Minister Habib Bou-

laires unveiled in parliament a Tunisian plan to solve the crisis which he said would give U.N. resolutions a practical dimension they now lacked.

The initiative had five points: Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, replacement of foreign troops in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states with Arab peacekeepers, Iraqi release of foreign civilians, a solution to disputes between Kuwait and Iraq and a solution to other Middle East problems.

Boulares said Tunisian envoys had presented the points to the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United Nations, the European Community, Iraq and other Gulf states.

"Most of these countries encouraged us... and we showed them that Tunisia was not an aligned country or a mere spectator."

Boulares alluded to other Arab peace initiatives by Libya, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and said they all offered a way out of the crisis.

"The military solution is not in

the interest of any party, be it Iraq, Kuwait, Gulf states, Arab countries or even those countries which have sent forces to the region," he said.

Parliament, meeting in emergency session to debate the crisis, unanimously adopted a resolution supporting Ben Ali's policy.

Medicine shortage

Western nurses on their way home Tuesday from Iraq reported a shortage of food and medicine in Baghdad hospitals as a result of the international embargo.

Ulla Backman of Uppsala, Sweden, said supplies of medicines at the Ben Ali Bitar Hospital would last only about another month. At city hospitals, antibiotics might last "a week or 10 days," she said.

The women were among 12 nurses, mostly Irish, who arrived at Queen Alia International Airport near Amman. Thirty-five other Western nurses flew home from Baghdad Monday.

Japan may give \$2b to Jordan, Egypt, Turkey to offset sanctions

TOKYO (AP) — Japan is considering giving \$2 billion to help Jordan, Egypt and Turkey, those countries hardest hit by the U.N. trade sanctions against Iraq, a trade official said Tuesday.

The move comes amid criticism that Tokyo was doing too little to help the international campaign against Iraq.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman Tuesday dismissed the critics as those who suffered from "a lack of knowledge" about Japanese efforts.

"It's nonsense to try to react to it (criticism) emotionally," Foreign Ministry spokesman Taiso Watanabe said at a news briefing.

Hiroyasu Horio, an official with the Ministry of International

Trade and Industry, would not elaborate further on the aid.

But news reports said the aid would be extended through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and \$600 million would be sent as early as mid-September.

Watanabe said total amount of aid had not been decided, but would be soon.

On Friday, U.S. Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady visited Tokyo on a world tour seeking \$10.5 billion to assist the three countries.

Japan has promised a \$1 billion aid package for multinational peacekeeping forces in the Gulf, including food, water, vehicles and prefabricated housing for

non-military uses. It also has pledged \$22 million to help refugees stranded in the region.

Critics in the United States have complained that Japan should do more since its economy depends heavily on oil from the Middle East. Almost all of Japan's oil is imported.

U.S. move

The U.S. Senate has unanimously approved a resolution to tally other nations' financial support in the Gulf crisis, threatening an erosion of U.S. relations with Japan and West Germany if they don't contribute more.

The resolution, attached to a spending bill for several govern-

ment agencies, directed President George Bush to present Congress a detailed report on the administration's cost-sharing efforts by Nov. 30.

In the first congressional action since Bush ordered U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia on Aug. 7, the resolution reflected lawmakers' sensitivity to complaints from voters that the United States is shouldering too much of the burden in the Gulf.

"During his consultations with other international leaders," Bush "should consider stressing... that failure by any country to actively contribute in the most appropriate manner for that country could have a detrimental impact on its bilateral rela-

tionship with the United States," the resolution said.

With 100,000 U.S. troops now deployed in the Gulf, the Defence Department estimates that its operation will cost \$2.5 billion by the end of this month and \$11.3 billion over the next year.

The European Community voted last week to contribute \$2 billion in economic aid to Egypt, Turkey and other countries who have contributed troops to the buildup.

Saudi Arabia also has pledged unspecified billions of dollars to the cost of maintaining the foreign troops in its country and the exiled emir of Kuwait has pledged \$5 billion.

"If combat arises, it will not be

Japanese boys whose lives are at risk, it will be American boys," said Senator John McCain. "The contemptible tokenism of the actions of the Japanese government to date merit nothing but the world's contempt and American hostility."

"This time the burden must be shared," said Sen. Dennis DeConcini, calling on Germany to send more ships to the Mediterranean and South Korea to send troops.

DeConcini also criticised Japan's one-week delay in sending 800 four-wheel-drive vehicles for use in the Saudi desert because its merchant marine balked at sending a ship into the region.

Keenan: Waite is alive

LONDON (AP) — Terry Waite, the Church of England envoy held hostage in Beirut for more than 3½ years, has been ill but is alive, released Irish hostage Brian Keenan said Monday.

"He was in the same apartment as I was being held in," said Keenan in an interview with Britain's Independent Television News.

Waite's cousin, John Waite, said this was the first firm confirmation in more than three years that Terry was alive.

"It is wonderful news," he said.

Keenan, 39, released last month after 4½ years in captivity, said he had heard the guards calling Waite by his first name. And he had heard Waite's English accent.

"I know Terry Waite is alive. I know he has been ill and the illness I do not think is serious," Keenan said.

Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie said the news would "put fresh heart" into attempts to free remaining hostages in Beirut.

Terry Waite, 51, disappeared Jan. 20, 1987, after leaving his west Beirut hotel to negotiate with Islamic Jihad, an extremist group, for the release of two U.S. hostages, academic Thomas Sutherland, 59, and 42-year-old Terry Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent of the Associated Press.

No group has claimed to hold him, but he is widely believed to be held by Islamic Jihad.

Thirteen foreigners — six Americans, four Britons, two West Germans and an Italian — are missing in Lebanon and believed to be held by extremist groupings.

Keenan, from Northern Ireland, had already spoken about contacts with Anderson and Sutherland and says he shared a cell with British hostage John McCarthy, 33, a journalist.

Interviewed at a retreat in Ireland's County Donegal, Keenan said he believed that during his illness Waite had had "frequent visits from the captors and from senior officers."

Waite, he said, "had been kept for a long time in a room in which there was a small generator to generate electricity because the power situation in Lebanon... they don't have any."

"So he was sitting listening to this for nearly six hours a day, pounding, pounding, pounding in his ear."

Keenan said he knew Waite had been ill because "I heard him coughing very heavily at night. I heard him being addressed by the guards as Terry."

"We always counted the number of people being taken to the toilet. We knew there was another hostage. They called him Terry and we knew it wasn't Terry Anderson."

"Although we didn't visually see him, we heard and I could hear under the door. His door was adjacent to mine."

"In the room he was being kept I heard his English accent. It sounds to me like it's Terry Waite's voice. I know he is a soft-spoken man. I know he is tall."

Keenan said he knew Waite's voice and accent because before he left to take a university teaching post in Beirut, he had seen Waite interviewed on television.

Runcie said he was heartened to have "clear confirmation" that Waite was alive. He said he was also encouraged by signs of a diplomatic breakthrough in relations between the European Community and Iran.

"Britain is of course part of the European Community (EC) and this may well be the best way to make progress," said Runcie.

Baker's visit to Syria expected to boost Assad

By Carol Giacomo
Reuters

MOSCOW — U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's decision to visit Syria is likely to boost the standing of President Hafez Al Assad and reflects the changing dynamics of Mideast politics following Iraq's takeover of Kuwait.

Baker's predecessor, George Shultz, also went to Damascus on at least two occasions. But this trip, culminating in a meeting between Baker and Assad Friday, comes at a strategically critical moment.

The United States is leading a multinational campaign against Iraq. A highly visible Arab involvement in this effort is seen as crucial and so far it has been absent.

The visit is also the first to Syria by a U.S. secretary of state since the December 1988 bombing of a Pan Am Jumbo jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, in which some 280 people were killed.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), which has been implicated in the attack, is based in Damascus.

Relations between Washington and Damascus have been tense for some time, although they have maintained formal ties.

Syria is on the U.S. list of states sponsoring "terrorism" and the State Department's 1990 "report on terrorism" says the PFLP-GC is "closely allied with, supported by and probably receives direction from Syria."

Ordinarily, U.S. officials would hesitate to be seen as boosting the credibility of such a country.

But Syria has joined other Arab countries in sending forces to Saudi Arabia and the United States is extremely pleased at this development.

Syria is one of Iraq's most bitter enemies. U.S. officials hope the image of Assad plotting

with Baker will send shivers down Iraq's spine and keep him guessing as to what fate might befall him if he refuses to give up Kuwait and abandon his expansionist drive.

"We think the Syrian position in all of this is quite significant," Baker told a press conference at NATO headquarters Monday before flying to Moscow for talks on German unification and other topics.

"I don't think anything heightens more the isolation of Saddam Hussein in the Arab World than Syrian involvement" in the U.S.-led anti-Iraq effort, he said.

Asked if he were concerned about the symbolism of being seen as courting Assad, Baker replied: "Not in the least."

"We're not embracing Assad and everything that he has done with which we disagree," he insisted.

Baker argued that the United States often talks with countries it has problems with and he said that he planned to raise these issues, including "terrorism," with Assad.

The main focus of their talks, however, will be the Gulf crisis and how to oust Saddam. "We'd be interested in the Syrian assessment of the situation and their view of the position of some other Arab countries," Baker said.

His mission to Syria could be seen in the context of the Mideast adage: The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

More than 100,000 American troops have been sent to Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Gulf to deter Saddam, and Washington apparently hopes ultimately to join Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in a long-term coalition to stabilize the region.

But the three Arab states have very different systems and motives for joining the anti-Iraq campaign and it is a question whether this effort could succeed.

Such a strategy could jar Israel, the main U.S. ally in the Middle East. It has maintained a low profile while Washington marshalled the international consensus against Iraq.

The Soviet Union said Tuesday Baker's trip to Syria was welcome and could help bring stability to the Middle East.

"It will be very helpful in providing stability and getting a better understanding of how the Arab World will react to what has been done in Helsinki and the U.N.," a senior Soviet official, who asked not to be identified, said.

The official also said that he welcomed the restoration of diplomatic relations between Iran and Iraq. Iran accepted a proposal for resuming ties made by Iraq Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz during a visit to Tehran Monday.

Israel sees the Baker visit to Syria as directed against Iraq. Defense Minister Moshe Arens said Tuesday.

Friday's meeting in Damascus was to be expected since Syria has sided with Washington against Iraq, he said.

"I believe this is part of the same coalition the United States has built against the aggression of Saddam Hussein — a coalition that includes an important Arab component: Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria," Arens told reporters.

Israel's biggest fear is that the Damascus meeting would give Assad leverage with the United States against Israel's control of the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau the Jewish state took from Syria in the 1967 war.

Israel unilaterally annexed the Heights in 1981, saying they were vital to its security. Washington does not recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Heights.

Ex-Israeli spy fears for life

OTTAWA (R) — A former Israeli spy says he is certain Israeli agents will try to kill or kidnap him but he is ready nonetheless to come out of hiding to support a new book that divulges secrets of the intelligence service.

"It's just a matter of time before they get me," Victor Ostrovsky told Reuters in a telephone interview. "There's a point in time when you get too mad."

He said two high-ranking Mossad agents visited him last week and threatened his life. According to Ostrovsky, they offered to pay him and the publisher their costs and expected profits not to release the book.

Titled "By Way of Deception: A Devastating Insider's Portrait of the Mossad," the book was due to be published in Canada next month. Israel won an Ontario court order last week barring its release until a hearing next Monday.

The book says among other things, that the Israeli Mossad service knew extremists were planning a 1983 attack on an American target in Lebanon before 240 marines were killed by a suicide bomber but withheld the information to sour U.S.-Arab relations.

"I was taught when I was a kid that by being quiet you're a partner to what people are doing," said Ostrovsky, who was born in Canada but worked for the Mossad from 1984 to 1986.

He is now in hiding but says he will emerge to support his claims when the injunction against the book is lifted.

"I could take off but the book needs me to back it up," he said.

Ostrovsky drew parallels to the case of Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu, who revealed details of Israel's secret atomic weapons programme to the Sunday Times of London and then claimed he had been drugged and kidnapped by Mossad agents in Rome and transported

to Israel by force.

He was later sentenced to 18 years in prison for treason.

Israeli news reports, relying on official leaks about Ostrovsky, focused on discrediting the former spy Monday.

Newspapers quoted former personal associates who portrayed him as a schemer with a wild imagination who picked up rumours and was driven by greed.

"They're building a new image for me there. They'll do anything they can," Ostrovsky said. "If I'm so terrible why did they take me? Why would they recruit a crook? If it was greed I would have taken the money which was offered me."

Ostrovsky acknowledged in the interview that his departure from the Mossad was not amicable and was initiated by superiors, but he would not elaborate.

"It was at their request," he said. "It was not a happy occasion."

Ostrovsky has left Ottawa for fear of his safety and said police refused to provide round-the-clock protection.

A Royal Canadian Mounted Police spokesman said it is not part of their mandate to protect him.

His Canadian publisher, Stoddart Publishing Inc., said it will hire security staff to protect Ostrovsky from Israeli agents if Canadian police do no more to ensure his safety.

"If the RCMP doesn't protect him we will hire someone to protect him," spokeswoman Sally Tindall said.

The publishing house is studying Israeli documents in the case to determine how to fight the injunction.

The book also reportedly contains details of the 1981 Israeli air raid that destroyed an Iraqi nuclear research facility. Israel feared the plant was intended to be the core of Saddam Hussein's programme to develop nuclear weapons.

Israel seeks to prosecute Miari

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's government attorney Yosef Harish has asked a parliament committee that Israel's legislature strip an Arab lawmaker of his parliamentary immunity for meetings with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and support for that group.

If successful, the move would allow to charge Mohammad Miari, of the left-wing Progressive List For Peace, with what Israeli law views as a criminal offense.

It would also be the first time a lawmaker lost his immunity for political reasons, according to Miari. Parliament members in Israel are by law immune from prosecution for any criminal activities.

Harish, in a speech before a parliamentary committee Monday, based his request on Miari's activities linked to a 1988 PLO plan to send a ship with expelled Palestinians aboard to Israel and the occupied territories, Israel Television reported.

Harish also cited Miari's meetings with PLO officials, defining his actions in 1988 as "undermining the existence of the state," the television said.

The PLO plan was cancelled in February 1988 after an underwater explosion off Cyprus blew a hole in the hull of the ferryboat meant to carry the expelled people.

The claim (of Harish) was that the case... was extreme in its seriousness, that there was an explicit support of the whole way and teaching of the PLO which endanger Israel's existence," Chaim Corfu, a committee member from Prime Minister Yitzhak

Shamir's right-wing Likud bloc, said on the television.

Harish's request also appeared to enjoy the backing of Shimon Peres' centre-left Labour Party, Israel's main opposition group.

"Miari has supported a PLO propaganda action that intended to press demands for the right of return" of Palestinian exiles, Labour legislator Chaim Ramon said. "The right of return means elimination of Israel."

Miari admitted meeting PLO officials but said he felt he should not stand trial.

"What I did, and what the others did... in meeting Palestinian personalities, was a violation of the law according to that draconian law," he told the television.

"A parliament member, by law, can violate the law in case it is done in the framework of his duties, and not he tried or charged for that," Miari added. "These are the rules of the game."

In an interview with the Associated Press last month, Miari has charged that attempts to strip him of his immunity were an Israeli secret service move aimed at frightening the country's Arab citizens.

There are 780,000 Arab citizens living amid 3.7 million Jews in Israel.

The majority of Israeli Arabs supports PLO demands for an independent Palestinian state in the occupied lands.

An Israeli court recently sentenced a well-known Jewish peace activist, Abie Nathan, to six months in prison for meeting PLO leader Yasser Arafat in Tunis.

Sharon's visit stirs up Moscow

MOSCOW (AP) — Soviet Jews are happy and Palestinians are protesting as Ariel Sharon, the former Israeli general and defence minister, is making an unofficial visit to Moscow.

Sharon, now Israel's housing minister and head of a cabinet committee on immigration, is discussing the possibility of buying prefabricated housing from a Soviet cooperative and sending fruit and vegetables to Moscow in return, according to media reports.

He arrived Friday night for the week-long visit and made his first public appearance Saturday at the city's main synagogue, where he was warmly greeted by a surprised crowd of about 100 Jews, witnesses said.

There had been no advance notice of his visit to Moscow in the Soviet press.

Sharon told the crowd at the synagogue that Israel would build 500,000 more housing units, enough for all Soviet Jews who emigrate. A record 80,000 former Soviets have emigrated to Israel this year.

Sharon called the current wave of emigration "the most important thing to happen to the Jewish people in the past 40 years," according to an American newspaper reporter and others who were present.

The busy 62-year-old encouraged Jews to continue to emigrate, despite a housing and job shortage in Israel, and said they will make the country stronger.

"Peace depends upon the number of Jews who come to Israel," he said.

Aside from a brief TASS report, there has been no coverage of Sharon's visit in the Soviet press. TASS said it learned he was in Moscow when it received a letter of protest from Nabil Amr, a Palestinian diplomat in Moscow.

Amr's letter called Sharon "the key figure responsible for the massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila" in Lebanon in 1982, according to TASS.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir appointed Sharon housing minister in June.

Soviet technical experts remain in Iraq

By Alan Cooperman
The Associated Press

MOSCOW — Although the Soviet Union has condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Soviet weapons and military experts helped make it possible, and many of the experts are still in Baghdad.

On Sunday, U.S. President George Bush raised the issue of the experts with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at their summit in Helsinki.

There had been speculation that Gorbachev might agree to pull them out quickly.

He didn't. But he did say at a news conference that their numbers had been reduced, from 193 to about 150, and that they would continue to leave as their contracts expire.

"They are leaving Iraq for the process is moving forward, so I don't think it's a problem," he said.

Soviet officials have denied that the experts played any direct role in planning or executing the Aug. 2 invasion. But Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennady Gerasimov has acknowledged a "moral problem" in the military cooperation with Iraq.

"Our military experts were in Iraq to show how to deal with Soviet military equipment, which was sold to Iraq for defensive purposes," Gerasimov said last Thursday.

"This military technology was used not for defensive purposes, which gave way to this moral problem — that is to say, we helped the aggressor."

Throughout the past decade, including the entire course of the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-1988, Moscow was Iraq's main weapons supplier. It sold Baghdad more than \$13 billion worth of T-72 tanks; Scud and SAM missiles; MiG-29, MiG-25 and Sukhoi fighters; helicopters; artillery; Kalashnikov rifles, small arms and ammunition, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in Sweden.

Technical experts — numbering in the hundreds and possibly in the thousands — were sent to teach Iraq's million-man army how to use and maintain the sophisticated weapons.

Today, the bulk of Iraq's arms are still Soviet, said Hans Binnendijk, a weapons analyst at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

Of Iraq's 5,500 tanks, all but about 30 are Soviet; the remainder are British Chieftains. Of its 500 planes, nearly 80 per cent are Soviet, although the Iraqi air force also has about 100 French Mirages. And of its surface-to-air missiles, about 500 are Soviet; the remainder are 60 French-made Rolands, Binnendijk said.

After the invasion of Kuwait, the Kremlin abruptly shut down the arms pipeline, even turning around a ship loaded with weapons that was heading towards Iraq, according to Soviet press accounts.

So why has Moscow balked at yanking out the technical experts?

Soviet officials say they are bound to honour their contracts with Baghdad. But Western diplomats and analysts say the Soviet have ample legal grounds to cancel the contracts, since Iraq "violated" the terms by using the weapons for offensive purposes.

Money could be a factor, but probably not a decisive one. The Soviet Union already has shown it is willing to forego hundreds of millions of dollars in trade with Iraq to comply with a United Nations embargo.

Some Western observers suggested that the Kremlin may view the experts as a way to retain influence with Iraq or that Soviet domestic politics could be involved.

"Pulling out the experts would be closing another door to influence over the situation there, and it might also anger certain conservatives in the Soviet military who feel Gorbachev has already caved into the United States and made too many one-way concessions," Mark von Hagen, a specialist on the Soviet military, said Sunday in a telephone interview from Columbia University in New York.

A senior Western military analyst in Moscow said he was "somewhat sceptical" of the Soviet claim that there were just 193 military experts left in Iraq at the time of the invasion.

"That came as quite a shock to everybody, when they gave the 193 figure, because we

thought a couple thousand Soviet advisers were there. But our numbers were never really all that solid," said the diplomat, who declined to be identified by name.

He added that the discrepancy between the Soviet and Western figures could be partly a matter of definition, with the Soviets choosing to count some advisers as civilians even though they work on military-related equipment or construction projects.

The newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya reported Aug. 26 that about 7,000 Soviet civilian experts and their dependents were in Iraq, most working on six large construction projects: A 1,680-megawatt power plant, two oil fields, a 40,000-ton grain elevator, a hydroelectric plant on the Euphrates River, and an irrigation collector.

Soviet officials say Moscow has stopped sending new civilian experts and has evacuated nearly 1,000 women and children on special Aeroflot flights.

Some Soviet newspaper columnists have urged the government to go further and sever its longstanding ties with Iraq.

"In my view, there are every grounds to say that the (1972 Soviet-Iraqi friendship) treaty has been violated by Iraq, and its continued existence... does not increase our international prestige," wrote Yuri Kornilov, a commentator for the TASS news agency.

He added that other voices have been raised against continued Soviet-Iraqi cooperation, but "it seems they are not heard in the tall building on Somolessk Square" — the Soviet Foreign Ministry headquarters in Moscow.

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Soviet deputies approve Gulf policy

MOSCOW (R) — The Soviet parliament approved Kremlin policy on the Gulf crisis, but 80 deputies abstained or voted against, and an army colonel expressed alarm about the large U.S. buildup in the region. Deputies voted 277 to 19, with 61 abstentions, to take note of a report by Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, to support a joint U.S.-Soviet statement demanding Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait and to approve measures to evacuate Soviet citizens. Shevardnadze had reported to the Supreme Soviet on last Sunday's summit in Helsinki. Before the vote, Colonel Anatoly Petrushevskiy, one of several dozen servicemen in the parliament, marched to the microphone to ask Shevardnadze whether he shared the military's concerns about the U.S.-led buildup in Gulf countries. "The foreign minister presented it as though we were talking about some kind of abstract troops and not 300,000 troops," he said. "And he did not reply to the main question — how does he feel about the fact that from among 300,000 (U.S.) troops in Western Europe there was not a single soldier sent to the Middle East?"

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)33200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

18:00 Damascus (RU)
18:00 Jeddah (CV)
18:30 Baghdad (LV)
18:30 Sam'a, Jeddah (TV)
18:30 Cairo (MS)
18:30 Dubai (EK)
18:30 Ankara, Istanbul (TK)
18:30 Frankfurt (LH)
18:30 Damascus (PK)
22:30 Paris, Damascus (AF)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

12:00 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:30 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
13:00 London (RJ)
17:15 Athens (RJ)
21:00 Riyadh (RJ)
21:30 New Delhi (RJ)
21:30 Cairo (RJ)
21:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (SV)
21:30 Colombo, Bangkok (SV)
21:30 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:30 Larnaca, Zurich (SR)
09:15 Beirut (ME)
09:15 Rome (AZ)
11:45 Larnaca (CV)
12:00 Baghdad (LV)
12:00 Frankfurt (LH)
12:00 Brussels, Rome (RU)
19:30 Jeddah, Sam'a (TV)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

12:00 Larnaca, Zurich (SR)
12:30 Beirut (ME)
12:30 Rome (AZ)
14:45 Larnaca (CV)
15:00 Baghdad (LV)
15:00 Frankfurt (LH)
15:00 Brussels, Rome (RU)
19:30 Jeddah, Sam'a (TV)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

12:00 Larnaca, Zurich (SR)
12:30 Beirut (ME)
12:30 Rome (AZ)
14:45 Larnaca (CV)
15:00 Baghdad (LV)
15:00 Frankfurt (LH)
15:00 Brussels, Rome (RU)
19:30 Jeddah, Sam'a (TV)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

12:00 Larnaca, Zurich (SR)
12:30 Beirut (ME)
12:30 Rome (AZ)
14:45 Larnaca (CV)
15:00 Baghdad (LV)
15:00 Frankfurt (LH)
15:00 Brussels, Rome (RU)
19:30 Jeddah, Sam'a (TV)

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12:30 Beirut (ME)
12:30 Rome (AZ)
14:45 Larnaca (CV)
15:00 Baghdad (LV)
15:00 Frankfurt (LH)
15:00 Brussels, Rome (RU)
19:30 Jeddah, Sam'a (TV)

Other Flights (Terminal

Soviet plane takes home 150 Bangladeshis

Likud Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — One of the world's largest cargo planes, the Soviet Antonov, airlifted over 450 Bangladeshis home Tuesday.

Jordanian officials expressed their gratitude for the obvious effort extended by some international non-governmental agencies to speed up the process of transporting mostly Asian evacuees, which are stranded in Jordan, to their home.

"Although this is an international issue, we are most grateful to those who are helping us at this time of need," one Jordanian official, working to ease the evacuees' crisis, told the Jordan Times.

The plane landed in Jordan for the fourth consecutive time in the last ten days to take home some of the 11,000 Bangladeshis still stranded here. It was chartered by the United Nations Relief Organisation (UNRDO) to help in the evacuation of some of the 100,000 evacuees who have fled from Kuwait and Iraq after the Gulf crisis began more than six weeks ago.

While some governments have been quick to evacuate their nationals out of Jordan, the government of Bangladesh has been one of the least responsive to the crisis.

The four-engine plane which has most recently been used to deliver a hospital to earthquake-struck Iran, flew in Monday night with food supplies consisting of an unspecified quantity of canned sardines and tuna fish.

The plane, which has no passenger seats at all, was manned entirely by a Soviet crew, and carried an estimated 476 men and four women.

The plane was originally designed to transport fighter jets, tanks and troops for the military. In recent years the plane has been chartered by international relief agencies to help in disaster areas such as Armenia and Iran after earthquakes.

3-day rally to test Arab popular support for Iraq, opposition to foreign presence in Gulf

Arab political groups to meet in Amman Saturday on Gulf crisis

By Lamis K. Andoni
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — More than 100 leaders and representatives of leftist, nationalist and Islamist parties will meet next Saturday for the first of its kind rally in solidarity with Iraq and against the U.S. intervention in the region.

The three-day event, organised by the Jordanian Arab National Democratic Alliance (JANDA), is expected to be attended by representatives of more than 20 political parties from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Sudan, Mauritania, Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon and Syria, in addition to Iraqi delegations, Jordanian parties and Palestinian groups.

Organisers said that the meeting aims at asserting that the current conflict is not between Iraq and the rest of the world, as indicated by U.S. President George Bush recently, but it is a struggle for Arab sovereignty.

"It is a message to the U.S. and the West that Iraq is not alone," said Mo'ones Al Kazazi, a Jordanian novelist and newspaper columnist and an independent member of JANDA.

"This is a struggle for Arab sovereignty and total independence from American and Western domination," he said.

JANDA, a broad, predominantly leftist, coalition of Jordanian parties and independent personalities, has extended invitations to prominent Arab activists, writers and leaders of popular organisations in an attempt to initiate an all Arab opposition movement against the American presence in the Gulf.

"The meeting will be nucleus for an organised and unified popular Arab movement to counter the American presence in the Gulf region," said Issa Mdanat, a communist member of JANDA.

According to written invitations sent by the alliance, the

three-day meeting is intended to rally Arab popular support for Iraq, the Palestinian uprising, Jordan and to widen opposition to the U.S. presence and plans in the region.

In view of the deep divisions which emerged among the Arab governments over the Gulf crisis, political analysts say that the meeting will be the first real test for the unity of Arab popular organisations.

Jordanian political activists assert that the meeting will prove that while the Arab governments are torn by their divisions over the Gulf crisis, there is a popular consensus against American control of the Arab oil resources.

"We want to give a greater role for the elected representatives of the people to voice their opinion loudly on the issue," Razazi said, explaining that many of the participants are elected members of Arab professional associations and trade unions.

"These are the real representatives of the Arab people not the leaders who supported the American presence at the Cairo summit," he argued.

JANDA officials conceded that the parties invited differ in their evaluation of the Iraqi takeover of Kuwait, but are united in their opposition to the U.S.-led multinational military troops in the Gulf.

"Some parties categorically reject the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait, while others fully back Iraq in everything," said a prominent JANDA member, who asked not to be named. "But we believe that a common ground will be easy to establish as they all are opposed to American policies in the Middle East," he explained.

JANDA officials hope that the Amman conference will build up popular pressure on Arab leaders who have sent troops to join the American forces in Saudi Arabia.

Although most of the delegations expected represent countries which have already stood against the American military involvement, the meeting will be an important forum to sound out the positions of the Egyptian and the Moroccan opposition movements.

Most of the Egyptian leftist parties have opposed the Iraqi takeover of Kuwait, but have been very critical of their government's pro-American policies.

A JANDA official said that while many Egyptian and Moroccan activists have accepted the invitation, the Syrian Baathists and communists have declined.

He said that a number of Lebanese leftists and Islamists had been invited but could not confirm the names of those who would show up eventually.

"Many are afraid of the Syrians but we hope that some prominent figures will be able to come," he said.

JANDA's official spokesman Mamdouh Abadi later told the Jordan Times that three independent Syrian writers and intellectuals had agreed to take part in the meeting, including well-known poet Mamdouh Odwan.

Another important objective of the Amman popular conference, according to JANDA organisers, is to secure wide popular backing for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's initiative in which he linked solution to the Gulf crisis to an overall settlement for the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The U.S. has so far resisted any attempt to link the two issues together, but many Arab analysts believe that Arab leaders and organisations should continue pushing for asserting the link.

Over the past two weeks popular activities across Jordan have been dedicated to supporting both the Palestinian intifada and Iraq.

For many political activists the

"steadfastness of Iraq" is crucial for sustaining the intifada and pressuring the West to address the Palestinian question.

"If Iraq collapses then it would be easier for Israel to crush the intifada and annex the Arab territories. At the same time the Gulf crisis should not overshadow the daily Israeli suppression of the intifada," one activist said.

On Saturday a big rally will be organised at the Royal Palace of Culture, where representatives of the various organisations will deliver speeches. The rally will, however, be followed by closed discussions, to take place at the Royal Cultural Centre, for the groups to discuss a unified strategy.

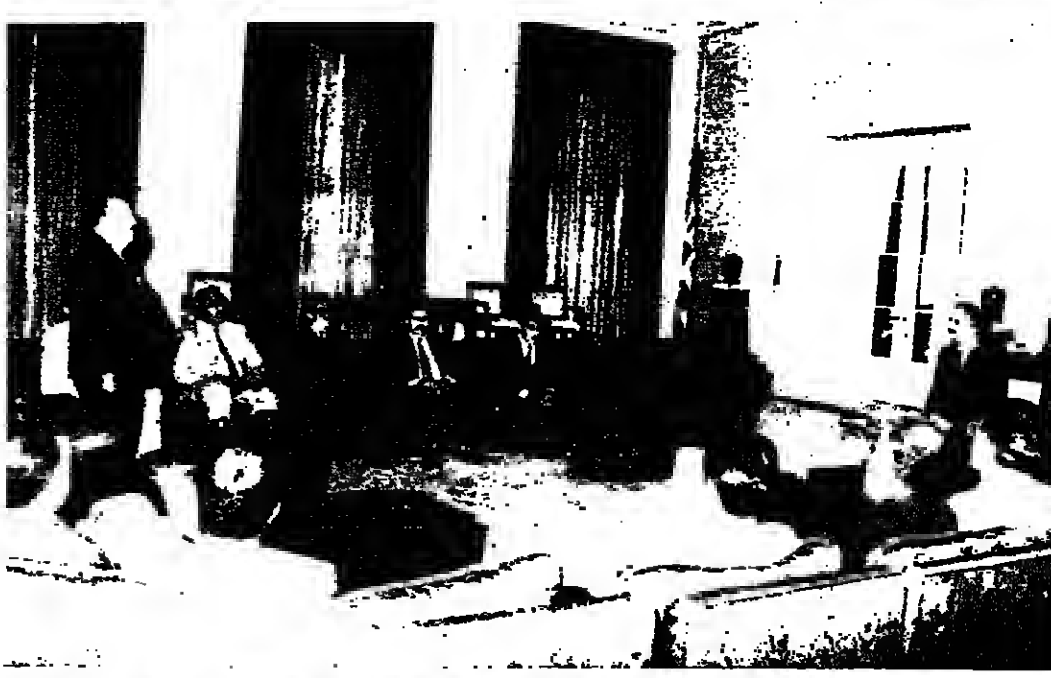
"There will be serious discussions on how to unite the Arab popular movement and to find practical steps to thwart American schemes in the area," said Mdanat, who is also a deputy in the Lower House of Parliament.

Among the immediate objectives of the meeting, according to JANDA officials, is the issuance of a declaration rejecting international sanctions against Iraq and demanding a withdrawal of foreign troops from the Gulf.

JANDA will press for an outright rejection of U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's proposal to establish a pro-American Arab security alliance.

"Such proposals have always evoked strong popular resentments here and in the Arab World. It is amazing that the U.S. is still pursuing such ideas despite the failure of similar plans in the fifties," observed Mdanat, who was actively involved in the Jordanian movement against the pro-Western Baghdad Security pact in 1955.

According to reports the suggested alliance would include the Arab countries which have so far supported the U.S. policies in the Gulf.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Tuesday meets a delegation of Arab jurists (Petra photo)

Crown Prince urges comprehensive solution to Middle East problems

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan said Tuesday that the complicated problems of the Middle East should be resolved in a comprehensive manner that would establish peace and justice for all parties.

The Crown Prince, who was reviewing the region's affairs and Jordan's stand vis-a-vis the Gulf crisis, stressed the need for a political solution to the crisis within an Arab framework.

Speaking at a meeting with a

delegation of Arab jurists, who took part in the third conference of Arab Jurists in the past three days, Prince Hassan also reviewed in detail the impact the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 661, which imposed sanctions on Iraq, has on Jordan's economy.

The participants at the third conference, which ended in Amman Monday evening, voiced support for Iraq's national stand and its president's initiative to find settlements for all outstanding Middle East problems.

The conference also called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the Gulf and demanded a halt to United States drive to mass troops and naval forces in the Gulf.

At the meeting with Prince Hassan the delegation expressed their deep appreciation to Jordan for its national stand and His Majesty King Hussein's continued efforts to find a political solution to the Gulf crisis within an Arab framework.

Despite impact of sanctions Jordan remains optimistic

By Serene Halasa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan, which has been going through an economic crisis for the past eighteen months is now rocked again by the recent Gulf crisis. Many economists in Jordan believe that the economy is in serious need for a long-term solution, especially if Jordan breaks all its economic ties with its neighbour Iraq, following the United Nations Security Council Resolution 661 that calls for a full embargo on Iraq for its August 2 invasion and annexation of Kuwait. Jordan thus is calling on the United Nations Security Council to be compensated in return for complying with the U.N. resolution.

According to the September issue of Jordan Economic Monitor, a monthly newsletter published by Fahed Faneh, Jordan stands to lose \$200 million annually in commodity exports, \$250 million annually in transit business and an increase in oil prices if it goes ahead with the embargo against Iraq.

As for the economic impact the severing of ties with Kuwait has on Jordan, this would include a loss of grants amounting to \$135 million, a loss in proceeds from commodity exports to Kuwait amounting to \$80 million annually, a return of close to 100,000 Jordanians working in Kuwait along with their families, (350,000 with their families), and a loss of \$320 million in remittances coming from Jordanian expatriates working in Kuwait.

In a memorandum sent by the Jordanian government to the Security Council in August 24, the government informed the Security Council that it stands to lose about \$4 billion as a result of complying with United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Article 50 of the United Nations Charter allows countries that are affected by an embargo or blockade on another country to be compensated for that loss. So Jordan's hopes are based on the fact that

compensation will be its only way out of this economic difficulty.

"In my opinion I think that if the compensation money was to be handed to the Jordanian government, it should immediately go to the Central Bank reserve in order to maintain and support the price of the Jordanian dinar and to stabilise the costs of exports," Taher Kana'an, president of the Industrial Development Bank of Jordan, told the Jordan Times. He also added that efforts should be placed on maintaining the current interest rates, "which are already below the normal rate of inflation."

Another suggestion on how to handle the aid money was made by a Jordanian businessman, Zaki M. Ayoubi, president of the United Automobiles Peugeot in Jordan. He suggested that the money be channelled through banks at reduced interest rates in order to encourage investors to invest in Jordan.

"The Central Bank would compensate the banks for the reduced interest rates on their loans. Income tax should also be reduced by half to generate a strong motivation for investment," Ayoubi said.

"Another way to handle the aid money, should it be granted to the Jordanian government, is to form a foreign trade cooperation that will replace Iraq as the main importer of Jordanian products, and to start selling these products to many other Arab countries at low competitive prices," Mamdouh Abu Hassan, president of Jordanian Businessmen Association, said.

Another problem facing Jordan's economy is the rise of unemployment. "We should try to intensify activities in all respects, in order to absorb the high number of Jordanians who are currently unemployed," Kana'an said. He also referred to a contract that was signed earlier in September between the Industrial Development Bank and the government to finance small scale productive projects in order to increase productivity, create

jobs and reduce unemployment.

According to a senior consultant at the Chamber of Industry, Ali Dajani, a meeting of all industrialists in Jordan was held in early September to discuss the recent crisis. It was proposed to form an emergency fund and a committee of five industrialists to assist the chamber board and to help manufacturers who are suffering due to the slow down in activities. "I feel we are being penalised under false pretence that we are the main suppliers of Iraq," Dajani said.

"The losers in this crisis are Jordanian entrepreneurs who built this industry after hard work and with prospects of expanding exports," Dajani said. He also said that Jordan is also facing the problem of stranded goods. "Large quantities of Jordanian goods are being unloaded in ports of over the world, for fear that these goods would go to Iraq. The shippers are thus wrongly applying a bill of lading that allows them to abandon their freight at any port because it is illegal to dock at the port of Akaba," Dajani said. The actions of the shippers inevitably lead to increasing costs of shipping on importers who have to reship the goods within thirty days of the unloading or else they would lose their rights to the goods.

Aside from the problems of unemployment and transit of goods, there is a problem of shortage of raw and intermediate material. "Right now we should look for new markets to supply us with the necessary materials and to serve as new markets for our goods," Ayoubi said.

Asked about his views for the economic future of Jordan, Abu Hassan said that he was optimistic. "If our system is stabilised and cleaned of bureaucracy, Jordan can and will be an industrial country, because we have the human element and the geographic element and if they are well guided by objective and positive sets of rules, and handled by an analytical mentality then we will be able to pass through this crisis," Abu Hassan said.

Jordan switches to winter time Oct. 5

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan will switch back to winter time on Oct. 5, 1990 when clocks will be set back 60 minutes to run two hours ahead of GMT, according to an official communique issued by Prime Minister Mudar Badran.

Summer time started this year on April 26, on the second day of Eid Al Fitr.

Another communique from the prime minister requested all ministers to submit reports about the projects carried out by their departments during the 1990 fiscal year and projects are intended for next year.

The communique said that reports on these projects should be submitted to the Prime Ministry before Sept. 20 and prior to the re-opening of Parliament's ordinary session, on Oct. 1.

The communique requested that reports cover only important projects, which can be included in His Majesty King Hussein's speech from the throne upon opening Parliament's ordinary session.

European Community provides aid to evacuees

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Commission of the European Communities has since Aug. 22 1990 provided a total amount of \$28.6 million in aid of evacuees entering Jordan from Kuwait and Iraq. An amount of \$1.7 million has been utilised to support an air and maritime bridge between Jordan and Egypt.

The Commission is also rendering support to the International Committee of the Red Cross (\$ 975,000), and to voluntary organisations including Medicines Sans Frontières (\$585,000) and Medicines du Monde (\$331,500). Medicines Sans Frontières is looking after the camp at Ruweisah, with Medicines du Monde taking charge of transit camps set up on Amman and International Fair centre's premises, and Andalous camp. Both organisations are providing shelter material, water tanks, food, medicines, and

medical staff (physicians and nurses) to look after the predominantly Asian nationals.

In addition, the Expatriates Welfare Committee of Jordan has been provided with \$260,000 to purchase food on the local market, and \$780,000 for inland transport.

The largest portion of the European Communities contribution is provided for an air bridge between Amman and Dhaka, Bangladesh, using aircraft from Royal Jordanian, Egypt Air and Air France. The air bridge, which commenced on Sept. 9 1990, is operated in close cooperation between the European Communities and the International Organisation for Migration. By the morning of Sept. 11 1990, a total of 14,200 Asian nationals had already been repatriated via the air bridge, in addition to flights provided by the respective Asian countries.

Jordan Times
Tel: No. 667171

Italy pledges aid to evacuees

ROME (AP) — Italy Monday pledged an additional 2.6 billion lire (\$2.2 million) in aid for refugees stranded in Jordan.

The new contribution brings the total amount of Italian humanitarian aid provided to victims of the Gulf crisis to nearly 7 billion lire (\$6 million).

The new Italian aid, which a Foreign Ministry statement said will "possibly be expanded in the near future," provides 2 billion lire (\$1.7 million) for the purchase of rice for refugees in Jordan. An additional 600 million lire (\$510,000) is to be provided to the office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation coordinator. It is to be used to establish an air link between Amman and Dhaka for repatriation of Bangladeshi workers who have fled Iraq and Kuwait, the Foreign Ministry statement said.

Italy had previously donated 4 billion lire (\$3.4 million) in aid to refugees and to the European Community Commission for Emergency Assistance.

Tens of thousands of foreign workers have fled Kuwait for Jordan since Iraq invaded its oil-rich neighbour on Aug. 2.

UNICEF starts third phase of relief assistance

AMMAN (J.T.) — UNICEF is presently completing the third phase of its emergency relief assistance to displaced people in Jordan. This phase was opened on Sunday Sept. 9 when UNICEF Deputy Regional Director and Jordan Representative Nigel Fisher and Director of the Jordanian-Higher Committee for Relief to Evacuees Salameh Hamad signed together a letter of understanding through which UNICEF extended \$100,000 to the committee.

This line of credit will help the committee meet the enormous local costs involved in providing adequate water supply and sanitation facilities in transit camps and in transporting food and other relief supplies to the camps.

After visits to Shaalan II and Mercy Camp (Shaalan II), over the weekend, the UNICEF representative authorised the delivery of UNICEF construction materials and disinfectants to the camps, on Sept. 10 and 11, for latrine construction and hygiene.

On Sept. 11 a UNICEF charter aircraft delivered a further 38 tonnes of relief supplies at the Queen Alia International Airport. The supplies included 10 hospital tents, 150 family tents, 250 rolls of tarpaulin and medical supplies worth \$25,000. 6,800 blankets were on board and a further 18,200 are due to arrive later this week.

Nigel Fisher indicated that UNICEF had also purchased from the Amman market 100,000 bars of soap, 25,000 mugs and 25,000 plates destined for the camp population, to be delivered to government authorities on Sept. 12.

Asked about the response to UNICEF's international appeal for emergency assistance, Fisher said that "UNICEF has so far received well over one million dollars, and we are confident that further pledges will be forthcoming in the next few days. To date we have spent over \$920,000 for the emergency, with a significant proportion of this on purchases from Jordanian supplies."

Armenian patriarch visits Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, Archbishop Torkom Manougian, arrives in Amman Friday on his first visit to Jordan, after his election as head of the St. James Brotherhood in Jerusalem on March 22, 1990.

During his week-long stay in Amman, the Iraqi-born patriarch will meet high-ranking Jordanian officials and visit Armenian community centres in Amman.

The patriarch was born in Feb. 19, 1919 and was ordained priest in 1932. He served as principal of the Armenian Seminary in Jerusalem from 1957 to 1960.

Patriarch Manougian is a leading Armenian scholar and musician who has written several books and has led the Jerusalem Church choir for many years.

In 1962 he was elected head of the Armenian Church in Eastern United States and remained in that post until his election as



Archbishop Torkom Manougian

Drive carefully!
Traffic can be hazardous

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- Open studio and workshop for artist Samia Zaru displaying paintings, sculptures and hand-painted fabrics. Location: off 2nd Circle, opposite Rosenthal (9:30-1:30 and 3:30-6:30).
- Exhibition displaying posters on environmental control measures of each sector of the environment (air, land and water) at the British Council.
- Archaeological exhibition entitled "Al Lajjun — a Roman Frontier Fort" at the Registration and Research Centre of the Department of Antiquities, Jabal Amman.
- Art exhibition by Salim Kana'an at the Royal Cultural Centre.

LECTURES

- Lecture, in Arabic, entitled "Agricultural Sector in Jordan... Future Look" by Deputy Mohammad Al Alawneh at the Royal Cultural Centre — 6:30 p.m.
- Lecture, in Arabic, entitled "The Danger of Chemical and Biological Warfare" by Dr. A.A. Sallab and Dr. A. Mahafza at the YWCA, Jabal Amman, Third Circle — 7:00 p.m. (the lecture is sponsored by the AUB Alumni Club and the YWCA).

THEATRE

- Shakespeare's play "Much Ado About Nothing" will be shown on video at the British Council — 5:00 p.m.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.

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Stunt or blunt step?

MANY people, especially in the West and North, are bound to view as a propaganda stunt the Iraqi president's initiative to give Iraqi oil to Third World countries free of charge. But many others are likely to think of the initiative as a thoughtful and timely step, particularly at this hour when oil prices have more than doubled. To the countries of the South, especially those most affected by the Gulf crisis and the soaring oil prices, the offer may come as a relief, both on the economic and political levels. On the former, the world is at the threshold of another shock since the price of a barrel of oil has jumped from \$15 to almost \$32. The huge increase puts the developing countries under difficult economic pressures, which their economies cannot tolerate, in view of their inability to adapt quickly to the new changes. The situation is different in the industrialised world, where change can be absorbed much more quickly by market forces. This means that these countries export their crises to the Third World countries, by raising their export prices, thus avoiding severe internal repercussions. Countries of the South cannot follow this mechanism, and therefore they have to suffer a lot from the soaring oil prices. This process makes the Iraqi initiative of great importance to them, given the fact that Iraq has huge oil reserves and production capacity which it is unable to use because of the blockade. This is why perhaps Iraq has decided to utilise this surplus by offering it free to poor countries in an effort to help their debt-ridden economies and get their people's support in return.

On the political level the Gulf crisis has a strong pan-Arab dimension, since the presence of foreign forces on Arab soil is an affront to nationalist and religious feelings. But the crisis also has global dimensions, as the problem lies at the heart of the conflict between the countries of the North and those of the South, or the haves and the have-nots. By taking its latest initiative, Iraq has allied itself with the latter thus placing the United States in a critical position, since it will find itself forced to explain why it would not allow the developing world to benefit from such an offer. This in turn might encourage poor countries to side with Iraq in its struggle with the mighty, rich West, or at least drive a wedge between Washington and many capitals of the world. President Saddam Hussein's initiative was immediately rejected by the United States and Britain, and the two countries have already said they would ban any free oil shipments to any third party. This Washington and London did without going back to United Nations Security Council for advice or guidance. This means that the international legitimacy which the countries blockading Iraq have pledged to observe will be very much undermined in the process.

Those people and nations who have dismissed Iraq's initiative as propaganda that will not work can continue to view it as such, if they so wish. Sooner or later, however, they may have some thorny legal, political and economic arguments to counter and contend with.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A columnist in Al Rai's daily Tuesday criticises measures imposed on the public by the Ministry of Supply which has stipulated that valid family registration books were the only means for members of the public to obtain the ministry's ration cards. Nazzih in his column says that this condition has not only placed obstacles before the thousands of citizens, but has placed an extra burden of work on the civil registration offices which are racing to meet the growing demand by the public to renew their family registration books to be able to get the ration cards. The writer questions the wisdom behind the ministry's imposed condition that family registration books should be valid, and says that many citizens are angry and cannot obtain the ration cards within the short period limited by the ministry nor can thousands of citizens obtain a renewal of their family registration books in time to meet the deadline. The writer says that civil registration centres around the Kingdom are currently witnessing congestions which prompted their headquarters to increase the number of staff and extend office hours. The writer proposes that the Ministry of Supply extend the deadline for obtaining ration cards one more month to enable a large sector of the public to benefit from the subsidised food commodities.

Iraq's offer of free oil to Third World countries is a noble gesture on the part of the Iraqi leadership towards those nations which stand to suffer as a result of the soaring prices of oil, said Al Rai's Arabic daily Tuesday. The paper said the offer displayed Iraq as a great nation which, despite the present embargo on its people and despite the sanctions, is willing to cooperate with the rest of the world and alleviate the sufferings of the needy. Unlike the United States and its allies, which have been practising blackmail on the poorer nations and trying to impose hegemony on them, Iraq is showing its sympathy and solidarity with the rest of the poor countries by offering help despite its own difficult circumstances, the paper noted. Greatness of a nation lies not through the acquisition of an arsenal of modern weapons and tools of destruction, but rather through its behaviour and its ability to do justice, the paper continued. Should the Americans and their allies stop the free Iraqi oil from reaching the poor nations of the world, the paper said, the poor masses of this world would suffer and would fall victim to the greediness and inhuman treatment of the hostile forces if Washington decides to deprive the poor nations of this free Iraqi offer, the paper concluded, it would be waging a colonial war against humanity.

Al Dustour daily Tuesday lamented the decision taken by 12 Arab states to move the Arab League headquarters from Tunis to Cairo, describing the move as another blow directed against Arab unity. The paper deplored this rash action on the part of these countries taken under the present difficult circumstances and as the Arab World is preoccupied with the events in the Gulf. It said the move was bound to cost the Arabs great deal and will not doubt destroy joint Arab action. Those countries which took the decision, said the paper, did not realise the severe damage they would be causing to the Arab League itself and to the Arab World's credibility. The only beneficiary of this fiasco, the paper said, is of course the Western alliance which is led by the United States and which is openly hostile to the Arabs and their national aspirations.

Economic Forum

Thatcher-style Britain: Echo-roar of a dead lion

By Dr. Abdalla Malki

SUDDENLY the colonial British lion is roaring in its grave. Incredible! Of course, dead lions do not roar. What we have heard must be a tape-recorded echo replayed in Maggie Thatcher's and Douglas Hurd's voices playing in a puppet show. Our British "friends" in Jordan must be very disappointed to hear us use the words colonial, colonialism and imperialism in the context of the present British, and Western, power politics in this area on the understanding that these words are obsolete terms which belong to distant history rather than to the world of today. Certainly we also thought they were so, and have been equally disappointed to see them resurrected by the recent U.S. and "Great Britain" practices in the area which cannot be labelled as anything other than "colonial" in text and spirit.

Pressed by plausibly deep-rooted vengeance motivations, Mrs. Thatcher's Britain has been pressuring Mr. Bush to

shoot down Iraq and President Saddam, irrespective of the concomitant humanitarian and economic costs to the area, its peoples and the world at large. British warships and offensive fighter planes are in the Gulf to do their share of destruction. A wild-eyed Mrs. Thatcher has spared no words or efforts to insult Arab leaders and in turn, Arab peoples and the Arab nation. And beware! Where there is no freedom of expression, the pulse of masses is starkly different from the official one.

The present British military presence in the Gulf cannot be explained without reference to colonialistic spirit. Britain does not import Middle East oil and has no reason, therefore, to worry about any possible disruption in oil flow. High oil prices, if they ever occur and be sustained, will not hurt Britain if it does not stand to benefit from them in the first place because, Britain produces its own oil. Some ill-intentioned Western com-

mentators will try, for a variety of reasons, to fool naive readers into believing that you will lose if you sell your products at a higher price, citing indirect and very long term effects which will not be verifiable because, as you know, we all will be dead in the long run. Definitely, it is not economics that is behind Thatcher-ordered British military presence in the Gulf. Why then are the British battleships and fighter aircraft there?

Thatcher, not necessarily Britain or the United Kingdom, is paying back in-kind a favour to American Republican presidents made when Thatcher invaded the Falkland Islands. But this does not justify the large-scale military commitment, she is lobbying for in the Gulf. The inherent dangers are so big to be explained by that favour.

If Thatcher is committing British troops and the lives of young British soldiers to defend the "royal family" of Kuwait, this objective must be

stated out clearly. This is not objectionable, but Thatcher must not any longer hide behind the guise of democracy and democratic ideals and thus fool the British people and tax-payers. If the driving motive for Thatcher's power-madness, arrogance and indecent attack on Arabs is her hatred for Arabs, she must draw on her "ironism" to announce that. Actually, one cannot think of any other reasons. A civilised and responsible stance of Western leaders who really care for human lives in this agonising crisis is to help and urge Arabs to solve their differences peacefully which they will undoubtedly do if they are not subjected to the pressures, fanfare and influences of certain Western leaders, like Mrs. Thatcher, who keep on beating the drums of war and fanning the fires of disputes, originally seeded by Mrs. Thatcher's ancestors.

There appears to be no rational justification for the very drastic stand taken by

Mrs. Thatcher. First, Mr. Bush has the political means and military muscle to tackle the Kuwaiti crisis and does not need the helping hand or mind of Mrs. Thatcher. She could have saved her country the dirty job of volunteering to provide advice and argumentation on the advisability of war and the inevitability of such a war. Britain is a net exporter of oil and does not stand to lose from a rise in the oil price which a British magazine, the Economist, tells us that, in real terms, it is still 20-25 per cent below its 1985 level.

It is believed that Mrs. Thatcher seduced Mr. Bush to take stands that could not be reversed without losing one's face. Now, as it has become clear that these stands may have to be reversed, Mrs. Thatcher herself is in danger of losing her face and is, therefore, reacting and speaking irrationally.

To those who really want to understand this part of the world, let us put it this way. To

Arab masses and by Pan-Arab standards and ideals, borders among Arab countries are not international borders in the standard sense of the word. They are inter-Arab borders arbitrarily drawn by colonial powers in accordance with the interests of these powers and in complete disregard for Arab national interests. Of course, to the West, to the "defenders" of international "law", and to most Arab rulers of the day, they are international borders. Therefore, the erasing of these artificial lines is not the crime conceived and portrayed by the West. Eventually, they must be erased in a similar manner to the borders separating the states of the American federation. Given the failure of attempts at Arab unity so far and the differences among Arab states, that goal might seem very far-fetched. But we are talking about nations and history where the time horizon is limitless and nations do not drop their very basic goal: Unity. Ask the Germans about it!

By Issa M. Dallal

The writer is a prominent Jordanian lawyer. "The following is the text of a speech he gave at a luncheon of the Rotary Club held in Amman on Monday."

IN ORDER to appreciate the present situation in the Gulf, and the underlying causes of the present conflict it may be worthwhile asking a simple, yet pertinent question: who are the Arabs? For this present crisis involves the whole Arab region, one way or other. This is not to say, however, that it was brought about by them.

Perhaps it is accurate enough to say the Arabs are originally Semites from the Arabian Peninsula, the majority of whom are Muslims, and whose mother tongue is Arabic. They are a proud race. Under the banner of Islam, they built a great empire, so much so that about the year 1200 A.D. Muslim Spain, or Andalus as it was called, was the most civilised part of Western Europe. In Europe the boundaries of the Arab/Islamic empire reached the Pyrenees and Constantinople, let alone the other parts of the world. Thus it is an undisputed fact that the Arabs have a wealth of history behind them.

But history is a turning wheel. These same Arabs — or the great majority of them — who were masters and rulers became subjects of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, and they remained so for four centuries. This period, the Arabs regard, as a very dark period in their history and rightly so. Nonetheless and against this fearful deterioration and humiliation, the Arab spirit was still hovering there — proud and rebellious. And perhaps this is the reason why a well-known historian, W.C. Smith in his book Modern History (Princeton, 1957 p. 95) was led to state: "The Arab sense of bygone splendour is superb..."

And as an Arab, I dare add that the memory of past greatness is not only supported by a sense and hope for present and future greatness — to equal, if not to surpass, that of the past.

"It is against this historical background and the future hopes and aspirations, that one can understand why and how Sharif Hussein-wishing to get rid of Ottoman rule-turned to the British as a possible ally and sent Amir Abdullah (later King Abdullah of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) in 1914 to see Lord Kitchener in Cairo.

Simultaneously, the Arab nationalist movement was growing and spreading. Particularly so, in Greater Syria where the Arab nationalist societies at the time fully supported Sharif Hussein and assured him of their backing in his stand against the Turks.

Thus, the Arabs threw in their lot with the allies, in the hope, and against promises, of gaining their independence. The surprise, however, came in "The Sykes-Picot agreement" which is described by a very moderate Arab historian, George Antonius, as a "shocking document." I wish to make no comment here, save by quoting verbatim from the writings of a well-known British politician-historian (Peter Mansfield in his book entitled the Arabs, p. 193, Penguin books) where he says about the reason for calling it a "shocking document."

Legal aspects in the Gulf crisis and the Arabs

"And it is easy to see why. In the so-called Arab rectangle formed by Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and Iraq of today, Britain and France planned to assume direct control over the most populous and advanced areas. The land between — which is roughly the Syrian desert — was to form an autonomous Arab region, but clearly this would be so weak and thinly populated as to be at the mercy of British and French power. Only in the backward impoverished Arabian Peninsula were the Arabs to be given real independence. In the spring of 1916 Sharif Hussein had no more than an inkling of the scale of Britain and France's plans."

What Peter Mansfield probably meant, but did not explicitly say, is that Sharif Hussein had no idea about this duplicity on the part of his so-called allies. Equally, and just for the record, he had no more than an inkling about the famous Balfour Declaration, which, the late President Nasser described as a promise "given by a party who had no right to give it, to a people who had no right to receive it" — obviously without the knowledge or consent of the people directly and adversely affected by it — the Arabs of Palestine.

Thus the Hashemite dream of Arab independence and unity was shattered to pieces and thrown by the wind of conspiracy to the four corners of the earth. So much for the out-on-tout distant past.

As to the Palestine problem, which remains unsolved till today, I believe it lies at the root of all what is happening in the area at present, one way or the other.

For the Arab sense of justice was so hurt by the Balfour Declaration and its implementation that the Palestinian Arabs revolted against the British mandate a number of times — in 1920 and 1921; in 1929 and in 1936 — the long lasting strike which developed into a general rebellion in 1938. According to some historians, the Palestine problem began to act as a fermenting factor for the modern notion of Arab nationalism ever before 1938, perhaps as far back as the 1930s.

For, although the move towards modern Arab nationalism started with Sharif Hussein, it was during the 1930s and 1940s that some thinkers and writers began developing and crystallising the modern ideology of Arab nationalism and the "secular" state in the modern sense of the word. The Arabs of this part of the world realised and fully appreciated that they were united, United by a common origin (Semitic race); a common history, a common homeland (the Fertile Crescent); one religion (Islam with a Christian minority); a common culture and one language — and which between all these common factors formed a single nation and one people.

"I had a dream," one great U.S. black leader once said. And I say the majority of the Arabs in this part of the world all say: "We dreamt a dream — a dream of Arab unity — or at least Arab unity."

It is against this background, and with the "dream" wish for the fulfilment of this dream of Arab unity, that the majority of the Arabs view the Iraqi move towards Kuwait — a move towards unity or union. Let us make no mistake about that.

Moving from generalities to the specific dispute between Iraq and Kuwait one salient feature is that it stems from geographical and historical reasons. Kuwait was an independent state before 1961, when it declared its independence. Historically, Kuwait was a part of the Basra district during the Ottoman rule. It was only in 1922 that the so-called modern borders of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait were established. And by whom? By Sir Percy Cox, the then British high commissioner, at the Uqair conference where the late Sheikh Ibn Saud was present. This is not incorrect to say, with President Saddam Hussein, that Iraq's borders were drawn up by a colonialist power.

Hence there is some merit at least — in Iraq's legal claim to all of Kuwait. Some other historians believe that as a minimum — Iraq has valid historic and strategic reasons for claiming a portion of north-east Kuwait, the two strategic islands of Bubiyan and Warba and a strip of land called Saddamiyat Mithaa.

To go further and a little deeper: many Arabs look upon Kuwait and the other small emirates as the products of European colonialism in order to dismember the Arab World and further hinder any hope for Arab unity.

The former British ambassador to the U.N. Sir Anthony Parsons, has recently said: "In the Iraqi subconscious, Kuwait is part of Basra province, and the bloody British took it away from them." Sir Anthony is very knowledgeable about this area having spent some 30 years as a diplomat in the Middle East.

No less forceful or illuminating is the remark made by a London-based historian and political analyst when he states: "It was intentional, not by accident — the making of Iraqi borders. It was British policy to prevent Iraq from becoming a Gulf state, because Britain thought Iraq would be a threat to its own (i.e. British) domination of the Gulf."

So much for history, as to the present, had the Western powers, led mainly by the U.S., moved the U.N. Security Council to take the famous five resolutions 660-665 purely out of respect for justice and peace, perhaps no one would have acclaimed them more than the Arabs themselves. But it does not require much intelligence or common sense to note that the motivation was totally otherwise i.e. pure and naked self-interest.

What adds fuel to the fire is the deep contrast between America's attitude in this case, as compared with its attitude regarding the Palestinian problem. Double standards, I am afraid, no more no less.

After much strife and struggle, and as a result of the 1967

Arab-Israeli war in which Israel was supported by the U.S. and in which the Arabs lost some very valuable territory, the U.N. Security Council passed now, more than famous, Resolution 242.

This resolution contained the following principles: The inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the territories occupied in the recent conflict, and a just settlement of the refugee problem.

That resolution was passed (22) years ago. The U.S. has not led a campaign against successive Israeli governments to implement it then or now? The question that poses itself is: Why?

Now, some 22 years later this same Security Council took resolution 660 (1990) in which it called upon Iraq and Kuwait to begin immediately intensive negotiations for the resolution of their differences and supports all efforts in this regard and especially those of the league of Arab states. The resolution was passed on Aug. 2, 1990.

Hardly has the ink dried, when on Aug. 6, 1990 (only four days later) the Security Council passed another resolution (No. 661), perhaps the first of its nature in the long history of the U.N. — and marked by its severity where it resolved: that "all states shall prevent..."

The import into their territories of all commodities and product originating in Iraq or Kuwait, exported therefrom after the date of the present resolution. The sale or supply by their nationals or from their territories or using their flag vessels to ferry any commodities or products, including weapons or any other military equipment... to any person or body in Iraq or Kuwait."

In other words, a total embargo except for "supplies intended strictly for medical purposes, and in humanitarian circumstances. What does the phrase "in humanitarian circumstances" exactly mean? And why this phraseology? Does it mean that on foodstuffs should be sold or shipped to Iraq except when the population starves? And where on earth, is the element of simple decency and humanity in all this?

Three days later, on Aug. 9, 1990 the Security Council passed another resolution resolving yet more strongly than ever: "The security council was determined to bring the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq to an end and to restore the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait."

And yet again 9 days later, the Security Council passed another resolution still (No. 664/1990) regarding the safety of Third State Nationals. Before I proceed to resolution 665, a question persists: Why did not the Security Council supplement Resolution 242, for example, by a similar resolution regarding the safety and well-being of Palestinians in the West Bank or Syrians in the Golan Heights, or regarding the sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the states concerned, Jordan, Syria and Egypt?

After all what is good for the gander is good for the goose. But no, the Security Council is not, or does not appear to be interested in the safety or well-being of the Palestinians, and one wonders why: Are Third-State Nationals in Kuwait and

An open letter

To the people of Iraq from citizens of the U.S.

Following is the text of a letter which first appeared in "Intelligence Journal" in Lancaster P.A. on Aug. 31, 1990.

To the children, women and men of Iraq,

THE guns of our country's military are trained on you. With a single command the blood of many could be shed. We do not want this. We do not want any of you to be killed. We do not want our own young men and women to die.

While we can never accept what your country's military did in Kuwait, neither can we support our country's threat of massive military response. We will resist it. We will refuse to ask our fellow Americans to kill and be killed to insure our supply of oil.

We, as Americans, do not now much about. Our government and our news channels have out been kind in their descriptions of you and your leaders. Your government and your media have perhaps described us and our leaders in a similar manner.

Today we write to you as brothers and sisters. We believe that your needs and joys and pain are not so different from ours. You love and care for your children. You work to earn your food. You cry when someone dies. You laugh and sing and fall in love. We do the same. Of course, there are many differences. But we believe that God, in whose image we are all created, has made us more alike than different.

We are being told that you are our enemies... We do not agree. We refuse to allow our government, our media, or anyone else to determine our enemies for us. In this period when our cold hatred and mistrust of the Soviets is slowly warming and the seeds of friendship are beginning to sprout, we will not redirect that hatred towards Arabs or Muslims or Iraqis. We want instead to know you, to accept you and to pray for you as equal members of a world-wide family.

Many of us here in the United States have allowed ourselves to be infected with war fever. Our TV screens show us tearful farewells. Bands play stirring music as soldiers march away. We paint the scenes in glorious colours to hide the true ugliness of war. We begin to believe that it is a kind of exciting game. We wonder if it is the same for you.

When we look beyond the gloss, we know that war is hell for all sides. Young men and women who have never met will be sent into the desert to kill each other. Your families and ours will never be the same as loved ones are snatched away during the prime of their lives.

For you a war will be even worse than for us. It is your land that will be ravaged. It is your innocent civilians that will "get in the way" and suffer most. Because our soldiers have fought all our recent wars in other lands, many of us do not understand the harsh realities of war. We commit ourselves to focus on the real cost: the dashed dreams, the broken bodies of soldiers and children, the despoiled earth, rivers and trees.

It is also you who will experience hunger as more and more food is denied entry into your country. We believe that food is a basic human right for all people regardless of race or class or religion. To deny food to anyone in need is to deny God and God's laws. We will work to insure that an adequate supply of food reaches your people.

There are many of our people now being held in your country against their will. We ask that you intercede for their safety and their freedom. They are our brothers and sisters and we care about them deeply. In the same way, we pledge our intercession for your safety. We pray that the presence of your civilians will be as strong a deterrent to all-out war as the presence of our own.

As world citizens, we affirm the sovereignty of all nations, large or small. From our country's own history, we understand the temptation to intervene in the affairs of smaller countries, but we can never believe it. So even while we humbly remember our own sins as a nation, we urge you to intercede for the people of Kuwait and we will support your efforts to undo that wrongful occupation.

In the spirit of repentance, we also remember the contribution of our country to your leaders' war-making ability in the past. We, as well as other nations, sold missiles, poisonous gas and nuclear potential to your country for our own financial gain. Ironically, some of those weapons may now be used on us. We humbly remember our virtual silence when some of your minority people were being gassed by your leaders. We lament our providing arms during your terrible eight-year-war with Iran.

Finally, as people of the United States and Iraq, let us agree together to use our human, material and financial resources for creative good. Let us use them to meet the incredible human needs within our countries. We have many hungry, uneducated and sick people, as you do. The military machine is sucking up our resources, and yours, in unimaginable quantities, creating suffering for us all. Our new-born hopes for military spending cuts and a peace dividend in this country are being smashed by this new crisis.

Together let us raise our voices against the defence industry and others who profit massively from war-making. Let us say no to those who would tell us that military solutions are needed. In our hearts we all know a better way. Let us together listen to our hearts.

We pray for you to the God who is the giver of all life. We ask your prayers for us. May we together find creative, non-destructive methods to solve our differences. We pray for wisdom and humility for Presidents George Bush and Saddam Hussein. We pray not for the success of either army, but for the protection and loving presence of God for all. We pray for a peaceful end to this crisis.

Your sisters and brothers,
270 signatures.

(Continued on page 5)

Legal aspects in the Gulf crisis and the Arabs

(Continued from page 4)

Iraq human beings and the Palestinians not?

No, it is unfortunately crystal clear that double standards is the name of the game. And, as if the imposition of economic sanctions — by virtue of Resolution No. 661 aforesaid — was not enough, the Security Council further resolved in its Resolution 665 (on Aug. 25, 1990) to: "call upon those member states cooperating with the government of Kuwait, which are deploying maritime forces to the area to use such measures... as may be necessary under the authority of the Security Council to halt all inward and outward maritime shipping in order to inspect and verify their cargoes and destinations..."

This resolution gave the U.S. in effect what it was aiming at by furnishing it with a plausible excuse for halting any shipping, at its own whim and fancy, as has recently happened at Aqaba. The U.S., in this instance, took the law into its own hands, contrary to law and the said resolution, for it is the U.N. through its own machinery, and not the U.S., which is authorised to enforce the blockade.

We fully realise all nations' need for oil, and perhaps the industrialised nations more than others. But if oil happens to be found in one or a few countries, I do not think that the industrialised nations should resort to war, or the threat of war, to obtain it. After all, there are many other commodities which are needed — and if war, or the threat of war was the only answer, then woe to the world at large, for the law of the jungle will then prevail. The bigger fish swallows the smaller and the fox devours the rabbit.

Let us recall together that the creation of conditions of stability and well-being are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations and peoples; let us try to achieve and realise — and call for the achievement and realisation of the noble purposes for which the U.N. was founded, in order to save the present and future generations from the scourge of war, which has brought untold sorrow to mankind; and in order to establish justice and peace among peoples, let us look at things in their right perspective. Let us solve the Palestine problem and the Kuwait problem — the former before the latter, because the continued existence of the will no doubt lead to ever greater misery to peoples and nations alike and may give birth to a problem as intense as the Kuwaiti problem if not more.

And to the American people, who are generally known for their sense of democracy and free thought, and to the British people, who are known for their courage everywhere and justice at home, we say: We believe in the sublime notions of the U.N. We believe in the truth and justice. But one thing we do not believe in, and will never subscribe to and that is "double standards" in international law — for, they are neither conducive to peace nor to justice. They are what some Europeans would call "the anti-Christ."

It is a well-known principle in international law that "the right of self-defence against

physical attack must be regarded as a natural right both of individuals and of states," and Article (51) of the Charter recognises it as such in relation to the latter.

According to L. Oppenheim: "The charter confirms the right of armed self-defence to the case of an armed attack, as distinguished from anticipated attack or from various forms of unfriendly conduct falling short of armed attack."

In the light of these views, the question that presents itself is: Has an armed attack occurred by Iraq against the U.S.? Or has been even an anticipated attack? Has an armed attack taken place against Saudi Arabia, or has one been anticipated? Obviously no.

So on what basis have the U.S. forces entered "peacefully" — if one may coin such a phrase in this context — into Saudi Arabia? I am afraid I have no answer except to say: Power politics and not international law is the order of the day. And this is very sad indeed.

Chapter VI of the U.N. Charter requires states party to a dispute to settle it — not by force or the threat to use force, but "by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, and/or other peaceful means of their own choice."

This is a far cry from war or the threat of resorting to war. As can be seen, the charter has laid down (9) nine means of settling disputes. One wonders why the Kuwait government or the U.S. for that matter have not resorted to one or more of these methods instead of beating the drums of war, louder and fiercer every day.

In his book, International Organisations, Clive Arthur states that: "President Jackson said of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who had ruled against his policy: John Marshall has made his decision: let him enforce it."

So much for the respect of law and the judiciary. Let us hope that the present U.S. administration does not subscribe to such an attitude — of so much disregard for law, judges and justice.

But then, this is not the U.S. at its best. The U.S. presented the world with Abraham Lincoln and his deep sense of justice; Woodrow Wilson and his 14 principles and ideals; President John F. Kennedy and his great moral courage, and many others.

In concluding, I would like to quote from a book entitled The United Nations — A short political guide by Sydney D. Bailly:

"All-out war with the most modern weapons would be too destructive and too indiscriminate to serve as an instrument of justice."

The Iraqi-Kuwaiti problem may lead to war — unless patience is exercised and the great powers fully realised that this planet, and all the wealth hidden or buried in it, is not theirs alone. That all people of the world deserve to lead a decent and respectable life — and that they have to share alike. Unless this is done — there will eventually be war. But sad as it, it has once been said "unless we abolish war, war will abolish all of us."

Asian evacuation improved

(Continued from page 1)

were waiting in Baghdad for an embassy signal to leave. "Only 500 to 1,000 are coming daily. We can now fly home 3,000 a day," he said.

Klaus Wierning, a coordinator with the U.N. Disaster Relief Organisation (UNDRO), said 7,000 non-Arab evacuees from Kuwait were leaving Amman daily on flights laid on by their governments or the International Organisation of Migration.

Wierning and other relief officials saw signs of improvement in the handling of more than 420,000 migrant workers and their families who have already fled to Jordan.

Meanwhile for most of the Asians at the various camps in Jordan, life went on. They queued for hours for water and food.

Buildings cleared the ground for more tents to be pitched alongside 750 already in use at the international fair grounds outside Amman.

Departures from the centre south of Amman outstripping arrivals for the first time, its director, Seif Dawagha, said.

He said 3,741 Asians left Tuesday but 2,471 more arrived from desert camps in the no-man's-land between Iraq and Jordan, where tens of thousands of Asians are stuck.

Many Asians accuse their governments of not responding quickly to their plight.

"I'm going home with no money, nothing, not even decent clothes," said Bangladeshi Imam Hussein, 31.

"I feel like an animal. This whole camp situation is inhuman."

Two Virgin Atlantic aircraft was due here Tuesday with relief supplies for refugee camps. One will ferry refugees to Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the airline said.

The British Foreign Office said a British diplomat in Baghdad would fly to Kuwait Tuesday to oversee the evacuation of about a hundred women and children, the last remaining British group that could leave. James Tansley, second secretary at the embassy in Baghdad, would be overseeing the evacuation, said a Foreign Office spokesman.

Overseas Development Minister Lynda Chalker left London for Amman on board one of the Virgin Atlantic flights, a Boeing 747, packed with 66 tons of relief supplies, including tents, blankets and dried food donated by companies.

Chalker will tour the refugee camps.

Airline spokesman Mark Harvey said the aircraft, returning late Tuesday, would take any Western women and children refugees waiting in Amman.

The second aircraft, a Boeing 707 which can carry 189 passengers, will make one flight to Sri Lanka with refugees, return to Amman and take one plane load of Bangladeshis home before going back to London, said Harvey.

Harvey said Virgin Atlantic and the International Organisation for Migration, were sharing the cost of the 707.

Tunis rejects league transfer

(Continued from page 1)

official said the date would now be decided in the next few days.

He said the delay was decided "to ensure the participation of all the members of the committee."

Tunisia's stand appeared to mean Tunisia would not join the committee. Tunisia, seen as one of Iraq's supporters in the Gulf crisis, has boycotted an Arab summit and two foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo in the past four weeks.

Minister Boulares said the Cairo decision was hasty and opportunist, was taken by a narrow majority and had exposed the league to divisions. If "did not reflect a fraternal attitude towards Tunisia," he added.

"Given the circumstances (the Gulf crisis), we would have preferred that the question of the move should pose no problem and that we should preserve this framework to rally all Arab states," he said.

Baz: Crisis split Arabs

A key Egyptian policymaker Tuesday blamed Iraq's takeover of Kuwait for splitting in two the Arab League and forcing its secretary-general to resign.

He said the way out is for Iraq's forces to abandon Kuwait within days and Baghdad to promise categorically that it has no aggressive intentions against its neighbours.

Osama Al Baz, chief political adviser to President Hosni Mubarak and first under-secretary at the Foreign Ministry, said

that then would allow Saudi Arabia to ask the United States and other countries to take their forces home from Saudi territory.

Interviewed in the state-owned magazine Sabah Al Kheir, Baz reiterated Mubarak's recent warning to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of a destructive war in the region unless he relinquishes Kuwait.

"We still caution that there is room for a peaceful settlement," Baz said. "If, after all the intensive efforts being exerted, the matter remains unsettled, then military confrontation will be inevitable."

Once the crisis is resolved, he said, the Arabs should do some soul-searching, to include "reconsideration of many methods and Arab organisations." He did not specify which.

The manoeuvring and squabbling apparently proved too much for the Arab League's secretary-general, Tunisia's Chadli Klibi. He announced his resignation last week.

"I believe his resignation reflects the frustration felt by Arab officials... after the bloody events that began on Aug. 2," Baz told the magazine.

Baz singled out the PLO and Jordan for criticism.

Saddam's statements "appeared to have created a Palestinian public opinion that believes President Saddam will be the liberator of Jerusalem... and will be the one to say 'no' to Israel and to challenge the United States," Baz said.

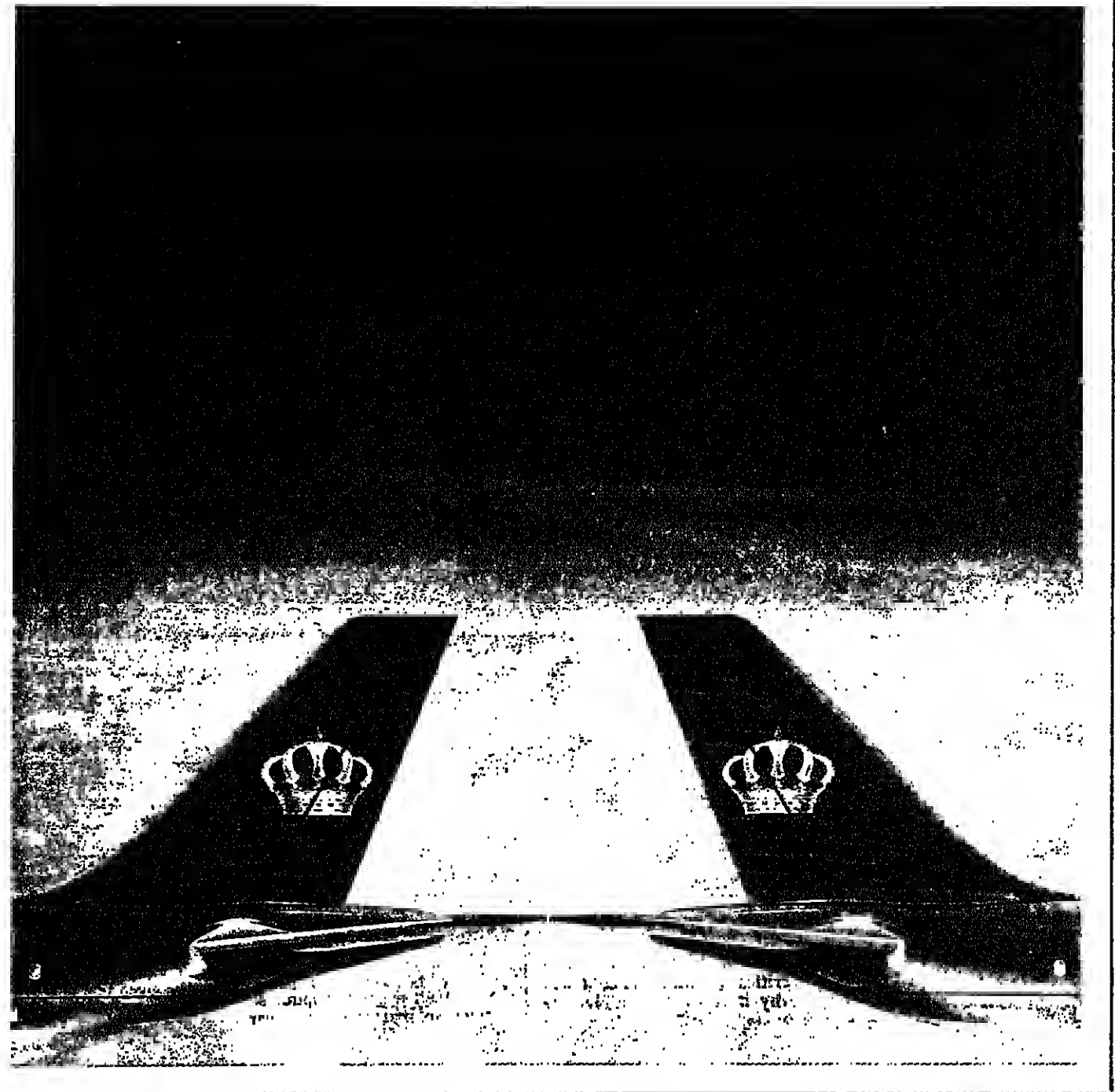
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Top IFC official analyses world privatisation process

WASHINGTON (AP) — The trend to private enterprise is worldwide, but changes will take time, especially in Eastern Europe, says an international finance official in the forefront of the transition.

"The process of privatisation in Eastern Europe is going to be a slow one, and one should not expect results too quickly," said Sir William Rhye, executive vice president of the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

After the dramatic collapse of communist governments last year, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that decided to shift from state to private enterprise are finding it a complex process, involving selection of capital sources and introducing modern management, Rhye said.

He appeared at a news conference marking the release Monday of the 1990 annual report of the 135-nation IFC, the World Bank affiliate which is the leading source of funds and mobiliser of investment for private companies in the developing world. World Bank President Barber Conable, a former U.S. congressman, is also IFC president.

The corporation approved its own new investments of \$2.2 billion in fiscal 1990 for 122 projects in 38 countries, demonstrating "the growing opportunities for profitable private investment in developing countries," Rhye said. Overall costs of IFC-financed projects totalled nearly \$9.4 billion, reflecting the attraction to other investors of IFC participation.

The IFC increased its net worth from \$1.6 to \$1.9 billion during the year and its paid-in capital reached \$1.1 billion. Rhye said he was optimistic that the privatisation trend and growing financing demands on IFC would prompt member nations to agree by the end of the year to the corporation's first general capital increase since 1985, otherwise, "we will have to slow our growth."

Doubling IFC's capitalisation "is one idea that has been discussed," but no formal proposal has been made, he said in answer to a question.

Eastern Europe, along with Africa, represents special challenges for IFC, the vice president said. "These countries are trying to make a very rapid move from socialist to market economy and need assistance of an organisation like ours."

The IFC is very actively providing both investment and technical services to Poland and Hungary, Rhye said. Soon after Czechoslovakia's forthcoming accession to membership, the IFC will hold talks in Prague on possible joint ventures with Czechoslovakia. Bulgaria and Romania are expected to join IFC later.

Rhye and IFC Vice President Richard Frank said the privatisation process is more complicated than anticipated.

Using Poland as an example, they said it has 8,000 public sector enterprises and raised questions such as whether they are owned by government, workers' councils or municipalities, and who has legal rights to negotiate asset sales.

Political upheavals highlight MIGA role

WASHINGTON (R) — The two-year-old World Bank affiliate that protects investors from political risks overseas may be getting some residual business out of upheavals in Liberia and Trinidad and the Gulf crisis.

The Multilateral Investment Guaranty Agency (MIGA), off to a slow start since its founding, believes it may have come along at the right time.

MIGA executive vice president Yoshie Terasawa told a briefing for reporters that developing countries and Eastern Europe are increasingly moving toward a market economy and are attempting to attract foreign investment they might have shunned in the past.

"At the same time, continuing international political tensions promote strong demand by investors for political risk insurance," he said.

Terasawa, releasing the agency's annual report for the year ended June 30, said MIGA had completed four deals covering projects totalling \$1.4 billion in direct investment.

MIGA not only serves as an insurance agency for investors wanting protection from political upheaval but helps countries develop an investment climate designed to lure investors from overseas.

The agency often works in conjunction with the bank in setting up financial packages to assist countries and provides the insurance that some investors feel they need when doing business in the Third World or the emerging countries of Eastern Europe.

Officials said they anticipated that the agency would close 10 deals this year.

They declined to say what countries were involved in the five beyond saying that there was one each in the Middle East, Central Europe, and South Asia, and two in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The agency, which has a capital base of \$151.5 million had earnings of \$7.2 million from investments. In addition, it had premium income of \$481,000.

Tension in Gulf clouds outlook for Qatar's natural gas exports

DUBAI (R) — Qatar's hopes for natural gas exports from the small emirate's vast North Field reservoir face an uncertain future, with Iraq's takeover of Kuwait forcing prospective buyers to reconsider.

"It will not surprise me if oil buyers commit themselves unless they feel supplies are really secure," said an oil industry executive in the Gulf.

Qatar has pinned hopes for its future on liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports since its oil wells, currently pumping a mere 380,000 barrels per day of crude, are expected to dry early next century.

Oil industry sources said development continued at the North Field, the world's biggest single gas reserves, but it was unclear if Qatar could sign any export deals until stability returns to the Gulf.

Qatar had been negotiating natural gas exports to Japan and Italy in liquefied form, and via pipelines to Dubai, Oman and even Kuwait.

Two major Japanese power companies were interested in purchasing at least four million tonnes per year of LNG from Qatar, a scheme that would take at least five years to complete and cost more than \$5 billion.

Oil industry sources said talks continue between Japanese buyers and Qatargas, established in 1984 to facilitate LNG schemes, but both sides were far from an agreement.

"Qatargas and Japanese companies are still talking, but the negotiations are not in a stage that will lead to a contract soon," an oil industry source said.

Qatar General Petroleum Corporation holds 70 per cent of Qatargas, with the remaining 30 per cent shared equally by British Petroleum, Total-CFP of France, Mitsui and Marubeni of Japan.

Oil industry sources said Qatargas had planned to sign a deal with the Japanese utilities

sometime this year so LNG exports could start in the second half of 1990.

They said an Italian utilities firm had shown interest last June in buying five million tonnes of LNG from Qatar, but it now seems to prefer purchasing gas from Algeria or Norway.

"Italians now seem to be completely out of the picture after the (Gulf) crisis put question marks on security of supplies," an oil industry source said.

No progress was reported on the negotiations with Dubai, oil industry sources said.

North Field production for domestic use is expected to start in early 1991 at a rate of 800 million cubic feet per day. This first phase is expected to cost over \$1.3 billion.

Further billions of dollars are needed for export production. Industrial countries regard LNG as environment-friendly and demand is expected to rise after the year 2000.

But LNG projects, from field development to liquefaction plants and LNG tankers, cost billions of dollars and take years to complete. Supplies must be guaranteed for at least 20 years.

Qatar needs buyers to start such a costly scheme and buyers need a guarantee of uninterrupted supplies.

"Nobody will sign multi-billion dollar contracts until there is some sort of (supply) guarantee," an oil company executive said.

Qatar needs natural gas from the North Field for domestic industry and power plants, as gas currently produced along with crude is inadequate. It also plans to use domestic gas as a feedstock in petrochemical plants and as fuel for an aluminium smelter.

However, oil industry sources said Qatar's aluminium plans are also in trouble, with two British groups competing to build the smelter having difficulty finding loans because of the region's political uncertainty.

IMF chief says rich nations should increase aid to poor

PARIS (R) — The head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) appealed to rich nations Tuesday to write off all official debt which had been run up by the world's poorest countries.

IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus, speaking at a United Nations conference on least developed countries (LDCs) in Paris, said good progress had been made in easing the Third World debt burden over the past two years.

"I cannot but add how much I appreciate the initiatives taken at this conference by France and by the Netherlands to cancel their official claims on the least developed countries. I trust that these examples will be followed by others," he said.

The final declaration from the conference is expected to set the industrialised countries a target of 0.15 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) for their annual aid effort to these LDCs.

But Camdessus said he was disturbed by a forecast by the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development that growth in the volume of aid would only be about two per cent in coming years.

He said that forecast, below rejected growth rates for the industrialised world, implied the target would not be reached.

"At a time when the new structural adjustment policies in many least developed countries are mobilising greater efforts at the domestic level, I would think that the donor countries should make more ambitious efforts to increase their provision of development aid more rapidly," he said.

If aid were to increase in line with donor countries' GNP, it would rise to \$73 billion by 2000.

"Instead of regarding this objective as out of reach, I think it should be regarded as a minimum, a starting point," he said.

Camdessus said the annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank starting at the end of next week in Washington would evaluate the impact of the Gulf crisis on the poorest states.

"May I add now that we will be able as necessary to increase our financing for the least developed countries where it is needed in order to address the needs growing out of this crisis," he said.

Camdessus said IMF-approved structural adjustment policies were paying dividends, even in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Turkey hikes petrol prices for 3rd time in five weeks

ANKARA (R) — Turkey, especially hard-hit by soaring oil prices since the Gulf crisis erupted, has raised petrol prices for the third time in five weeks.

The latest increase of 15 per cent means prices have risen 54 per cent since Aug. 7, hampering efforts to curb inflation.

Turkey, which imports 90 per cent of its oil, became prone to spot market developments after shutting its end of a vital Iraqi oil pipeline, from which it took 60 per cent of its import needs in 1989.

"The adverse affects of the Gulf crisis on petrol prices will last," State Minister Mehmet Koceler, in charge of oil, told reporters.

The developments came amid

Gorbachev favours Shatalin plan

MOSCOW (AP) — President Mikhail Gorbachev told the national parliament Tuesday he favoured radical economic reform ideas endorsed by the Russian Republic, rather than his own government's moderate blueprint.

Gorbachev stated his preference publicly for the first time just hours after Russia's parliament, meeting across town, nearly unanimously approved the radical plan that would abolish most central control over the economy.

The Russian Supreme Soviet voted 213-1 for the radical plan, written by a special committee led by economist Stanislav Shatalin. It also urged the national legislature to follow suit. Russian President Boris Yeltsin has warned that the vast Russian Republic would proceed with the plan even if the national Supreme Soviet rejects it.

The developments came amid weeks of debate and political bickering over which plan to implement to try to resolve the protracted economic crisis.

Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov Tuesday presented the national lawmakers with his moderate plan that ignored radical ideas by Shatalin.

Gorbachev's statement served in part to head off a confrontation that would have resulted if the national legislature had adopted Ryzhkov's plan.

"We should try to work out single document, and we are nearing it," Gorbachev said. He said he preferred the Shatalin plan as "integrating the ideas of the constituent republics," including the Russian Republic.

"If there is a real plan to stabilise finances, money circulation, the rouble and the market, then we should adopt the Shatalin idea," Gorbachev said. "To be honest, the Shatalin plan impresses me more," he said.

Ryzhkov later told reporters "the president did not tell me that he supports the Shatalin plan. He said he found some positive things in it."

The prime minister said he felt compelled to present his plan because he strongly opposed parts of the Shatalin plan that he said would greatly weaken the central government, deprive it of its ability to levy taxes, cause unemployment and lift controls on prices.

The Shatalin plan would lower living standards by 30 per cent

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French franc	124.2	124.9	Belgian franc (for 10)	202.6	203.8

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23 killed, 100 wounded in fresh South African township fighting

KATLEHONG, South Africa (R) — Twenty-three people were killed in South Africa's township war hours before talks Tuesday between anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela and President F.W. de Klerk on ways of ending the violence.

Twenty-one people were killed and 100 wounded overnight when 200 Zulu migrant workers living in a men's hostel attacked residents in Katlehong township southeast of Johannesburg, witnesses said.

"I counted 21 bodies. But more people could have been killed in other parts of the township," a local community leader said.

Police said they found 12 bodies after the fighting ebbed. "Shots were fired between the two groups and a few shots were fired at the police and 12 people were killed," a police spokesman said.

Two more bodies were found

in nearby Vosloorus. One man had been hacked to death. Another had his throat slit.

The fighting for political control between township residents supporting Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and migrant workers loyal to Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party has cost 650 lives around Johannesburg in the past four weeks.

Details of the planned meeting between Mandela and De Klerk in Pretoria were not released, but Mandela and his team are likely to level charges that the police have taken the side of Inkatha in its bloody conflict with the ANC.

Shortly after midnight a bomb damaged the entrance of Johannesburg's Avalon Cinema, which is showing a series of African and foreign films. On Monday it showed a French Canadian film "how to make love to a Negro without getting tired"

which depicted sex between a black man and a white woman. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast.

White extremists have said they planted bombs which damaged a synagogue and offices and homes of anti-apartheid politicians and journalists earlier this year.

Witnesses at Katlehong said the hostel-dwellers first fired shots at residents and then attacked everyone at sections of the township called Mosiliki and Ramokonopi.

The grim, barrack-like hostels were created under Pretoria's apartheid policy to separate black workers from the white communities they serve. Many inhabitants are Zulus from Natal province who support Buthelezi's Inkatha.

A group of township youths repelled the Zulu attacks. Streets were barricaded with rocks and sheet metals.

The fighting intensified as houses and vehicles were stoned and damaged.

ANC officials say security forces and white right-wingers are joining supporters of Inkatha to fan the violence around Johannesburg in a bid to scupper talks between the ANC and the white government on ending apartheid.

Both Pretoria and police deny the ANC charges.

Business Day newspaper called for the resignation of Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok, saying he had failed in his task of keeping the peace.

"Arguments about who is responsible for the violence are secondary to Vlok's responsibility for stopping it," it said.

"Township residents, hostel dwellers and squatter communities are entitled to lead their lives without fear, slaughter and mayhem as those in leafy white suburbs."

Bonn, allies to agree on nuclear free E. Germany — NATO sources

BRUSSELS (R) — West Germany and its allies will agree to a Soviet demand that East German territory be kept free of nuclear weapons after unification, but some differences with Moscow remain, NATO sources said Tuesday.

It is one of the key questions to be resolved Wednesday, when the four World War II allies — the United States, the Soviet Union, France and Britain — are expected to initial and agree in Moscow with the two German states on unification.

"The four NATO allies involved in all this have worked out a common position, that goes some way to meeting the Soviet position," said one alliance source, referring to West Germany, Britain, France and the United States.

Moscow last week demanded a binding commitment in the six-power accord on Germany's international status to keep the Eastern part free of atomic weapons and nuclear-capable weapons systems like heavy artillery.

The sources said the Western allies, including Bonn, would offer to keep what is now East German territory, to be part of NATO after unification, free of nuclear weapons in peacetime.

This practice is already common among NATO members like Norway and Denmark.

They will refuse to bar deployment of weapons that could launch nuclear warheads, as the Soviets have also demanded.

"We think that such limitations would be too tight, since an awful lot of (conventional) artillery and aircraft are actually nuclear-capable in theory," said one source.

West Germany has never had its own nuclear arsenal, but its territory is dotted with U.S. nuclear artillery shells and short-range missiles — a legacy of its position as the West's frontline state during the cold war.

The two Germans are due to be formally united on Oct. 3. The agreement in Moscow will put an end to the rights and responsibilities held by the four allied powers since 1945.

The allies had originally rejected the Soviet demand for a nuclear-free Eastern part of Germany as an infringement of German sovereignty.

As another NATO source explained: "The Germans themselves are ready to make the concession on not stationing nuclear weapons there during peacetime, so it's their choice."

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker discussed these and other issues with his Soviet counterpart, Eduard Shevardnadze, in Moscow Tuesday.

Unified Germany will be a full member of the 16-nation Western alliance, but Chancellor Helmut Kohl has pledged that it will not produce or possess nuclear weapons.

Bonn has also pledged not to station allied troops in what is now East Germany, once a loyal member of the Warsaw Pact, as long as Soviet troops remain

there. But German territorial army units may be stationed there.

Bonn and Moscow recently agreed that the 370,000-strong Soviet forces would be withdrawn by the end of 1994, and this week agreed on compensation to help resettle the soldiers.

"Everyone at NATO is fairly happy with the idea of no nuclear weapons in Eastern Germany," said one alliance source.

"Since Soviet forces are withdrawing from Eastern Europe, the military threat has gone. And nuclear weapons were not exactly going to be popular with the East Germans."

West Germany has agreed to pay Moscow 12 billion marks (\$7.5 billion) for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from what is now East Germany by the end of 1994, a Finance ministry spokesman said Tuesday.

Karlheinz von Den Driesch told Reuters Finance Minister Theo Waigel revealed the figure at a meeting of the ruling Christian Democratic Coalition in West Berlin.

The sum includes the cost of stationing the Soviet Union's 370,000 troops in what is now East Germany until their withdrawal by the end of 1994, as well as support for construction of new housing for returning soldiers.

The agreement also covers support from Bonn for training programmes for the returning Soviet troops.

Vietnam welcomes Cambodian agreement

HANOI (R) — Vietnam welcomed Tuesday an agreement by the Phnom Penh government and three guerrilla groups on ending their 11-year civil war and setting up a joint Supreme National Council.

"Even so, in the march towards peace there are still many obstacles to overcome," a Hanoi Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said in a statement.

She reiterated Vietnam's position that the Cambodians themselves had to decide their future.

"Vietnam welcomes the decision... by the Cambodian sides about the agreement by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council on a political settlement of the Cambodian issue and the completion of the Cambodian Supreme National Council," she said.

United Nations Security Council members Britain, China, France, the Soviet Union and the United States agreed last month on a Cambodian peace package in which the warring groups would lay down their arms, form a transitional governing body and allow the U.N. to organise and supervise elections.

The Hanoi statement said Monday's agreement in Jakarta by Vietnam's ally the Phnom Penh government and the three guerrilla groups backed by China and the West was a step towards resuming international peace talks that began in Paris a year ago.

The statement said Vietnam would try its best to contribute towards a political settlement of the Cambodian conflict.

The Phnom Penh government of Prime Minister Hun Sen was installed by Vietnam after Hanoi sent its troops into Cambodia to overthrow the Communist Khmer Rouge in December 1978.

France said it may reconvene soon the Paris peace conference on Cambodia following the agreement in Jakarta.

In a statement issued Monday night, the Foreign Ministry welcomed the accord between the warring Cambodian factions to set up a National Council that would form the basis of a U.N. peace plan for an interim administration and elections.

The statement said Foreign Minister Roland Dumas "believes the way is open once again for a resumption very shortly of the Paris conference."

A first session of the 19-nation conference aimed at finding a peaceful solution to more than a decade of war in Cambodia broke down in August last year.

The assaulters escaped in a car waiting outside the club, one of hundreds in this British colony that feature mahjong, a Chinese combination of dice and dominoes.

The fire spread rapidly through the ageing wood building. Firefighters extinguished the blaze about an hour after it broke out. Inside, police found six bodies — five staff members of the club and one taxi driver.

Another 23 people, 19 men and four women, were taken to Queen Elizabeth Hospital for treatment.

The attack was the latest incident in a crime wave fuelled by guns, drugs and criminals from China and the apparently growing power of local criminal gangs.

Police said Triad gangs, which dominate the neighbourhood of run-down six-storey tenements, were fighting for protection money from the club.

In the past two weeks, four gangs of men have stolen a total of \$2 million worth of jewellery and gold. During one robbery, a bystander was killed.

A shuttle has not flown in more

Doe's death appears unlikely to end war in Liberia

MONROVIA, Liberia (AP) — President Samuel Doe's ouster and death appear unlikely to end Liberia's 8½-month civil war, even though his overthrow was the main goal of rebels when they launched their insurgency.

Rival rebel forces control various sectors of the country, and the main rebel group pledged Monday to keep fighting until the withdrawal of a 3,000-member West African Task Force that seeks to end the civil war.

Doe died of gunshot wounds suffered in fighting with rebels who captured him Sunday. The U.S. State Department Monday confirmed the reports of his death.

The British Broadcasting Corp. quoted witnesses who visited a rebel camp near Monrovia as saying Doe's mutilated body was on display there.

The witnesses quoted by the BBC did not say how Doe had died.

They said, however, that they watched rebel leader Prince Johnson interrogate Doe about the disappearance of millions of dollars of state funds during his 10-year rule.

Fighters loyal to Johnson controlled the capital, but a 10,000-member force led by rival rebel leader Charles Taylor holds most of the rest of Liberia.

On Sunday, Johnson named himself president until elections can be held. Shortly after Doe's capture, however, Doe loyalists named a successor to the former Liberian leader.

The civil war began after Taylor crossed into the West African nation of 2.3 million residents from Ivory Coast on Dec. 24. The task force was dispatched on Aug. 24 to end bloodletting that has often followed tribal lines.

More than 5,000 civilians have died.

Gambian President Sir Dawda Jawara, chairman of the Economic Community of West African States, said Monday: "Now that Doe has been toppled by Prince Johnson... it might help the peace process in Liberia."

Both Johnson and Taylor had demanded that Doe step down, and their rival forces have on occasion clashed.

Taylor declared Monday that his movement would "intensify its efforts to bring this crisis to an end by moving into Monrovia at any expense." He spoke in a broadcast over the state radio, which is behind his lines.

He has repeatedly claimed to be on the verge of seizing the capital but has been bogged down in the city's eastern suburbs for nearly three months.

Taylor spokesman Tom Woewiyu said his group would fight until the regional army pulls out.

Indian troops clash with Muslim militants, kill 21

SRINAGAR, India (R) — At least 21 people were killed Tuesday when Indian security forces fired on a bus carrying suspected Kashmiri militants, causing it to blow up, police said.

Ashok Patel, head of the paramilitary Border Security Force, said militants opened fire after an Indian patrol stopped the bus.

The bus, loaded with arms and explosives, blew up in the ensuing battle, he told Reuters.

Patel said 17 people aboard the bus were killed. Four militants who tried to escape were shot dead by the patrol near the village of Phunze, 40 kilometres north of the city of Srinagar, centre of a Muslim-led separatist revolt.

One policeman was killed and two others injured in the battle, he said.

Phunze villagers told a different story.

In a complaint to police they alleged the patrol set fire to the bus, burning 20 to 24 passengers alive, after shooting dead four alleged militants who tried to run away when the bus was stopped for a routine search.

The complaint said the bus was heading for Srinagar, summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, when it was stopped in Phunze.

A police spokesman at district headquarters said by telephone that authorities were trying to verify details of the complaint.

Patel said all the passengers were militants. The complaint said that only the four who tried to escape were militants.

Patel described the incident as a "strong encounter." He said the patrol seized seven assault rifles, 10 pistols, two rocket launchers, two light machineguns, one walkie-talkie radio and ammunition.

Paramilitary reinforcements and state officials rushed to the scene as tension mounted in neighbouring villages after news of the incident spread, police in Srinagar said.

More than 1,100 people have been killed in Jammu and Kashmir since the militant campaign mushroomed into a revolt in January.

Officials have acknowledged 16 security force deaths in the past week, against about 60 during the whole of the previous nine months, and have expressed concern at the increase in militant attacks.

India has poured at least 25,000 paramilitary police into the Kashmir Valley to quell the uprising and Kashmiri Muslims accuse them of murder, rape and arson.

The militant campaign in Kashmir has increased tensions between predominantly Hindu India and Islamic Pakistan. The two countries have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir since gaining independence from Britain in 1947.

The Kashmiri militants seek either independence or a merger with neighbouring Pakistan.

Hindus arrive for Kashmir protest

A bomb blew up the railroad tracks Tuesday just 15 minutes before the scheduled arrival of a train carrying leaders of a Hindu protest against Muslim militants in Kashmir, officials said.

There were no injuries, state officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The train, which normally carries about 1,500 people, was late. When the bomb exploded, the high-speed express was sitting at a station 20 kilometres to the south, the officials said.

They said they did not know who was responsible for the explosion, which was heard more than 3 kilometres away. The bomb was planted about one-half kilometre from the train station at Jammu, winter capital of Jammu-Kashmir state, they added.

Members of the Hindu group, in telephone calls to news offices in Jammu and New Delhi, blamed Kashmiri Muslim militants.

The All India Students Federation, which is associated with the Hindu right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party, plans to lead a procession from Jammu to Srinagar, the heart of the Muslim secessionist movement.

Commission presents Nepal king with revised constitution

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP) — The Constitutional Revision Commission has presented King Birendra with a proposed constitution stripping him of his absolute powers and making Nepal a constitutional Hindu monarchy.

The king, whose Himalayan nation was rocked by mass demonstrations for democracy last winter, received the draft Monday. He turned it over to Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai for finalisation, according to Vishwanath Upadhyaya, chairman of the Constitution Recommendation Commission.

The draft must be approved by the cabinet and returned to Birendra, who in his curtailed

powers as head of state would formally promulgate the new constitution, Upadhyaya told reporters.

Bhattarai, a top leader of the Nepali Congress Party, became prime minister last April after a people power movement ballooned into marches on the royal palace and prompted the king to loosen his absolute rule.

Birendra dismantled the non-party system of government established by his father, King Mahendra, 29 years ago and agreed to become a constitutional monarch in a multiparty democracy. Under the old constitution, political parties were banned and the king held executive, judicial and legislative powers.

Record rains claim 30 lives in S. Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Record-breaking rains soaked South Korea Tuesday, causing massive landslides and widespread flooding and leaving at least 30 dead and 16 missing and forcing 25,000 people from their homes.

The Central Disaster Relief Centre said the Seoul area had 38 centimetres of rain in a 24-hour period. The hardest hit was Suwon, a city immediately south of Seoul, which had 43 centimetres, it said.

The disaster centre said it could not immediately verify the names of the dead and missing.

The rainfall was the largest in Seoul in a single day and brought the total for the year to the most since records began being kept in 1907.

Heavy rains were expected to continue until Wednesday. Flood

warnings were issued for Seoul and central provinces.

U.S. and South Korean military helicopters were being used to evacuate people stranded on the tops of houses and buildings south of Seoul.

A Buddhist temple was buried in a mud slide with five monks inside, MBC television reported. It said a factory dormitory collapsed, killing six sleeping employees, but two others were rescued.

One hospital on the outskirts of Seoul evacuated its patients, and witnesses reported seeing patients wading through waist-high flood waters with belongings held over their heads.

The wide Han river which cuts through the city of Seoul was nine centimetres (four inches) above the flood mark at noon Tuesday and rising, officials said. Water

tanks, pieces of machinery and parts of buildings were seen bobbing in the raging waters.

"This is the worst weather disaster in memory," President Roh Tae-woo said after being briefed at the Han River Flood Control Centre. "Protecting people from this rain is like fighting a war."

Roh ordered a mobilisation of the military and all government agencies to help minimise the loss of life and property damage. Government offices were told to remain open around the clock.

Part of the Olympic expressway, which runs along the river and alongside the site of the 1988 Olympic Games, was closed. Parks along the river were flooded.

Midday traffic in the city of 10 million people was at virtual standstill in more than 40 locations.

Fuel leak, Hubble are not only troubles for NASA

HUNTSVILLE, Alabama (AP) — It's so damp and musty in Jim Lewis' leaky office at the Marshall Space Flight centre that tiny mushrooms sometimes sprout on his moss-flecked window sill.

Down the hall, Mary Spaulding leaves a garbage can near her door to catch drips from the ceiling that periodically flood the floor.

The sprawling, concrete block structure, which houses the Electronic Systems Laboratory, is the most dilapidated building at Marshall. Marshall is the U.S. space agency's most dilapidated major field centre. The oldest section was built by the army in 1957 as part of Redstone arsenal.

"What we hope is we don't have legionnaires' disease up there," Lewis said, pointing to moldy ceiling tiles above his leaking, tar-spotted window.

NASA's buildings are crumbling, much as its image has this summer.

A shuttle has not flown in more

than four months because of hydrogen leaks that have crippled two of the fleet's three space shuttles. NASA thought it had fixed all of Columbia's leaks, but hydrogen flooded the rear compartment last week during fuelling for a third launch attempt and the countdown abruptly was halted.

Workers at Cape Canaveral Tuesday installed new fuel pumps in an attempt to eliminate the latest leaks and clear the way for a fourth launch attempt early next week. The astronomy mission has been on hold since May.

In addition to leaky shuttles, NASA has spent the summer contending with mirror flaws in the Hubble space telescope that prevent a sharp focus, communications problems with the Magellan spacecraft orbiting Venus, and growing criticism over the proposed space station freedom.

Still, it is the day-to-day working conditions that are the im-

mediate worry of NASA employees nationwide. The problem is aging buildings and not enough money to maintain them, according to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

"Almost all of NASA's facilities were built in the mid-1960s," said Ted Ankrum, who oversees the agency's construction and maintenance projects. "It's the coming up on 30 years, and 30 years is about the lifetime for roofs. It's lifetime for heating and air conditioning systems. It's lifetime for paving and runways."

"It's the lifetime for very many things, so that what we've got are a lot of building shells and a lot of things inside that need to be replaced."

The to-be-fixed list is a handyman's nightmare.

Leaky roofs abound, including the one on the 525-feet-160-metre tall vehicle assembly building at Florida's Kennedy Space Centre, the second largest

building in the world in terms of volume. Rain, on occasion, has splashed down on computers in the adjoining Launch Control Centre.

Ventilation systems and heating boilers are so old that parts are no longer available and NASA must make its own components.

There also are aging electric switchboards, cracked and pitted steel roads, asbestos-filled ceilings and walls, and the list goes on.

NASA officials insist none of the maintenance problems jeopardise workers' safety. Every so often, though, shuttle operations fall victim to building disrepair.

NASA officials say they are doing what they can.

The space agency is seeking \$186 million for maintenance for fiscal 1991, which begins on Oct. 1 — up two-thirds from this year. About \$400 million will be needed annually for maintenance.

COLUMN 8

Grandmother jailed in custody case

NEWPORT, Rhode Island (AP) — A 77-year-old grandmother went to jail Monday because she refused to tell a judge where her daughter and granddaughters have been for five years in a child-custody dispute.

Mary Pigeon said nothing as she stood before superior court Judge Mark A. Pfeiffer for the five-minute hearing. In previous hearings she has remained silent or has denied knowing the trio's whereabouts, angering Pfeiffer, who has accused her of lying. By noon, she was being processed through prison security, headed for the minimum-security section of the adult correctional institutions in Cranston, said prison spokesman Joseph Dinitto. Pfeiffer, who had given Mrs. Pigeon until Monday to tell him where her daughter, Elaine Yates, and the girls were hiding, said she would remain in prison until she talked.

"I feel very sad about it, and I wish Elaine would come home," Mrs. Pigeon said later as she and her lawyer pushed through a mob of reporters outside the courthouse. "Please come home, darling, with your children. We all love you."

But Neil Philbin, attorney for Russell M. Yates Jr., the girls' father, put little stock in Mrs. Pigeon's denials of knowing where her daughter and granddaughters are. In August 1985 Mrs. Yates and the children, Kimberly Ann, then 3, and Kelly Ann, then 10 months, left their Warwick home after Mrs. Yates found her husband with another woman on the family boat. Yates later acknowledged hitting his wife and cutting her forehead with a diamond ring when they argued about incident.

Pope ends African tour

NAIROBI (R) — Pope John Paul has returned to the Vatican after his seventh trip to Africa, leaving health workers dismayed by his uncompromising views on AIDS and birth control.

Hours after arriving on African soil 10 days ago, the Pontiff made clear he had no intention